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Revising Resistance: Historical Violence in the Globalized Postcolonial Imaginary

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Revising Resistance: Historical Violence in the Globalized Postcolonial Imaginary

by

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Dedication

For Mom and Dad: without your unconditional and constant support none of this would have been possible.

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Abstract

Revising Resistance: Historical Violence in the Globalized Postcolonial Imaginary

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Revising Resistance: Historical Violence in the Globalized Postcolonial Imaginary examines contemporary Anglophone texts from India and Kenya, focusing on their representations of historical revolutionary violence. I show how this literature navigates between postcolonial romanticization and ethnonationalist nostalgia, to chart a revision of historical resistance narratives that emphasizes complexity and solidarity across the lines of race, class, gender, and ethnicity. The fields of history and anthropology have increasingly focused on demythologizing revolutionary violence and on understanding the roots of contemporary large-scale ethnic and terrorist violence. However, this kind of reevaluation has yet to happen in global Anglophone literary criticism, even though literature presents a uniquely productive site of study because of its narrative capacity to link the historical with the contemporary in its representations of the violence of the dispossessed. Through a comparative south-south analysis of the entangled temporalities of more recent literary representations of the Maoist-inspired Naxalite Movement in India and the anticolonial Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya, *Revising Resistance* argues that this canon productively interrogates the national project, ethnic

tensions and their histories, and gender roles in the context of war. In excavating the novels' investments in solidarity, I articulate how narratives can be read to support a project of healing and unification through alternative histories that value complexity and contradiction over flattening narratives of nostalgia on both ends of the political spectrum.

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Preface

This project began with two important starting points. The first was my discovery during my field exam reading that writers from India and Africa were increasingly returning to historical violence in their novels, specifically the Mau Mau Uprising and Naxalite Movement. This general focus then narrowed after an imperative from Barbara Harlow in the early stages of thinking through what I wanted to focus on to figure out what made me angry. And what made me angry, in any representation of violent anti-state resistance from the colony or postcolony was this idea that had gained cultural legitimacy of the inherent and singular morality of nonviolence when it came to resistance and dissent. It frustrated me to see Gandhi and MLK held up above and instead of figures like Fanon and Malcolm X.

I therefore went into my analysis of the novels under consideration hoping to find new ways of thinking about the validity of non-state violence, a project that felt particularly imperative in light of the global war on terror, police brutality here in the United States, and intensifying imperial and state violence around the world.

However, the books wouldn't quite give me what I was looking for. In lieu of a defense of violence I found ambiguity and contradiction. I forged ahead, however, crafting arguments that began as critical of the novels in their indictment of non-state violence in the terrorist acts of the Maoists in Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others* and of the brutality of violence during the Mau Mau Uprising in Yvonne Adhiambo Owour's *Dust*. The title of my first chapter indicates this frustration at finding ambiguity where I was hoping to excavate support. However, as I read more I realized I was functioning within the binary thinking that has somewhat characterized discussions of violence – with condemnation arrayed against blind support. What was happening in the novels and

began to become clearer the more I read and re-read was something more complex, something that refused sides, something that was attempting to hold a mirror to the world as it is, and then make subtle interventions. I realized I had to change my approach from "searching for the transformative imaginary" to asking a different question: what are these novels trying to do? What are the themes that emerge across Indian to Kenyan texts in their representations of historical revolutionary violence? Ultimately I found the following:

In the novels in chapters 1 to 3, the authors represent large swaths of history, often shuttling between different time periods in narratives that fragment and entangle temporalities. This narrative practice seemed intent on emphasizing the continuities between the experiences of the dispossessed both under colonial rule and after independence. Across all periods represented in the texts, land dispossession, poverty, state violence, and corruption are constant. By highlighting the continuity of material dispossession across historical periods, the texts indict both colonial and postcolonial governments and insist on the continued need after independence for systematic change.

Second, the representations of the actual violence of non-state actors, which originally frustrated me, were ambiguous and critical. In Owour's *Dust* for example, all violence is atavistic and brutal. But even more importantly, the narrative makes the "side" of the perpetrator of each violent act relatively obscure. The outcome of such a representation is to highlight the horror and trauma that stems from bodily violence regardless of its motivations or the side for which it is carried out. In *The Lives of Others* and other Naxal novels, the authors are similarly invested in pointing out the ripple effect of each violent act, regardless of the merits of its ideological motivations.

I have argued in the dissertation that part of the unwillingness to support violence as a possible answer arises from the increasing firepower of the state, which, though

always strong, even during the colonial period, has arguably reached a point, with the advent of drones, and other military technologies that non-state actors simply cannot make a sufficient impact on the state with guerilla tactics to succeed in their political aims.

Yet – despite their indictment of non-state violence, what I did find in the novels was a simultaneous sympathy with those who feel it is their last and only option. Mukherjee's novels, along with Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, especially and unflinchingly expose in horrific and minute detail the immiseration of the poor, and the abuse of tribal people in India that makes some turn to the Maoists as what feels, ironically, like their only way of being human – insisting that they will not be treated as they have been by the state, at least, not without a fight.

It was then, really in the final stages of pulling these disparate chapters together and working to see the pattern that what emerged for me was the necessity of telling the stories of the dead – that somehow, to listen to the past – to listen to people who turned to violence or who suffered it – mattered. This is the message, it seems to me, of *Dust*, which attributes the violence of 2007 to the unheard and unremembered dead of the earlier conflicts that had been forgotten by state decree. In a similar way, it seems also to be the message of Mukherjee and Roy's latest novels in which female Maoist fighters transmit their stories to the reader and other characters posthumously – a reminder by the authors that their stories still must be heard. Perhaps, as Jennifer Wenzel argues in her work on the legacy of the cattle killing prophesies in South Africa, the posthumous messages of both revolutionary movements and individual fighters might "survive in the imagined but as yet unrealized future."

What is this future then? To tell alternative stories, to think history differently, to try to be honest about the present - seems perhaps to be a way of establishing radical

solidarities across time and across space. The authors of the texts under consideration interestingly are invested not in single protagonists but in a wide array of characters from different positions, backgrounds, genders, and time periods. Putting them into conversation with one another within the text, and asking the reader to consider them as a whole makes what I think is an important intervention into thinking not only the postcolonial nation, but the globalized world.

I had gotten about to that realization when Roanne Kantor recommended I read Svetlana Boym. Her concept of nostalgia in its dual categories: restorative and reflective, helped me to conceptualize and name the project I was trying to trace through the novels. Written as they are in a moment of crisis as authoritarian populist regimes are gaining support and anxieties about national purity are high, these novels seem to me to be writing against not the concept of nonviolence as the only appropriate response for the people, which is where I started intellectually, but – against contemporary flattening narratives of exclusive national and often relatedly – ethnic and racial identity. Hence my argument that the novels here chart a course between the nostalgias of both the left and right – of the romanticization of revolutionary violence on the one hand, and the fantasies of ethnonationalist purity on the other. If I were to start writing this dissertation today, this would be the question I would start with: in what way do these novels offer an alternative conceptualization of the past from the restorative nostalgia being mobilized on both ends of the political spectrum? Specifically, what potential liberatory futures are they imagining?

Introduction

The coincidence of the triumph of the liberal market economy and increased globalization since 1989 with the emergence of new forms of large-scale violence including communal and ethnic conflict and the global war on terror have placed questions about the connection between globalization and violence center stage across many scholarly disciplines. Contemporary debates about revolutionary violence in the era of globalization and the war on terror reflect a tension between romanticized views of anticolonial struggle and the investment of war on terror discourse and rising ethnonationalist movements in the arguments about the monopoly of the state on legitimate forms of violence.

Though revolutionary violence was framed as liberatory during the anticolonial era, perhaps most notably by Frantz Fanon[1], and alternative forms of everyday resistance were romanticized in the 80s and 90s as what James C. Scott famously called the weapons of the weak[2], the war on terror era has drastically shifted discourse on the violence of the dispossessed. As Priyamvada Gopal suggests, "when it comes to violence exercised in the name of radical political and social transformation, dominant discourse

[1] In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon articulates the necessity of violence in the process of decolonization, which he defines further as creative rather than destructive on both the individual level and for colonized society. The praxis of violence by the colonized in his figuration "unifies the people", "eliminate[s] regionalism and tribalism", and on the individual level is a "cleansing force" that rids the colonized of their "inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude" thereby rising them to the "level of the leader" (50-1).

[2] In *Weapons of the Weak* (1985), Scott calls for an increased attention to "*everyday* forms of peasant resistance – the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rends, and interest from them" (xvi). These everyday forms of resistance, what he defines as the "weapons of the weak" have less to do with organized resistance and even less so violence, and rather include "the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on" (xvi).

assumes, rather than argues for, its fundamental unacceptability", generating an immediate pre-judgment of non-state violence regardless of contexts and circumstances (2013).

Yet a critical analysis of the globalized postcolonial world reveals a continuity between the economic and political dispossession, and excessive forms of state violence of colonial history and the postcolonial present. The material and political demands that motivated anticolonial movements in many ways persist in the conditions of the dispossessed in the postcolonial world, even arguably increasing in the context of neoliberal market expansion in the 1990s with the expansion of transnational corporations into postcolonial spaces and the associated rearrangement of production in the former third world, along with sharp rises in income inequality[3]. Simultaneously, scholars including Arjun Appadurai, have highlighted the emergence of new forms violence stemming from the dispossessed in the globalized postcolony, focusing primarily on individual acts of terror and in moments of communal inter-ethnic conflict. These new forms of violence, though inextricably linked to historical and political processes of dispossession, are no longer mobilized by the transformative politics which drove the militancy of anticolonial and other anti-state revolutionary movements. An impasse thus emerges between revolutionary violence that has lost legitimacy and viability, and nonviolence that fails to adequately address the effects of continued economic disparity, land dispossession, and the experience of state domination and violence against the economically and culturally disadvantaged. There has been an increase in studies emerging in the fields of historiography and anthropology that work to

[3] See David Harvey *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2007) on neoliberalism, and Vijay Prashad *The Poorer Nations* (2012) for specific analysis of impact of neoliberalism on postcolonial nations. Bernard D'Mello reads neoliberalization in the 1990s as causing India's record-breaking increase in top 1% of national income from a share of 6.2% in 1982-3 to 21.7 percent in 2013-14 (2018, 176).

demythologize romantic assumptions about historical revolutionary violence and, separately, to understand contemporary forms of communal, ethnic, and terrorist violence. Yet, contemporary literature, as a productive site of study in its narrative capacity to link the historical with the contemporary in its representations of the violence of the dispossessed, has not yet been taken up in a book-length project.

"Revising Resistance: Historical Violence in the Globalized Postcolonial Imaginary" responds to this impasse by analyzing contemporary novels that connect the complex and contradictory nature of historical revolutionary violence with the material, socio-political contexts of contemporary violence in the postcolony. The novels analyzed here use these entangled temporalities to highlight the continuities of exploitation, poverty, and dispossession from the colonial through the postcolonial era, interrogating the legitimacy not only of the postcolonial state, but any national project that calls for unity while eliding such persistent issues. However, neither do the novels romanticize violence in response. Rather, I argue that this literature navigates between postcolonial romanticization and ethnonationalist nostalgia to chart a revision of historical resistance narratives that emphasizes complexity and solidarity across race, class, gender, and ethnicity.

My analysis centers specifically on Anglophone novels from India and Kenya, which I argue are beginning to establish a new canon of resistance literature specific to the site of the globalized postcolony in their insistence on the "on the "here-and-now" of historical reality and its conditions of possibility" which, according to Barbara Harlow, "underwrites much of the project of resistance literature" (1987). While by no means the only logical pairing, India and Kenya were selected due to the similarities in their colonial pasts as well as contemporary instances of violence, which can be variously interpreted as ethnic in origin or due to long histories of land dispossession and the

immiseration of the poor in each country. Therefore, while the dissertation is attentive to the specificities of the local contexts of textual analysis, I see the novels analyzed here as taking part in a similar conversation revolving around colonial histories of divisions and dispossession and what can be done to heal from such historical trauma in alternative ways to violence against other citizens. I argue that all of the novels are invested in this type of recuperative project when it comes to thinking through the nation and its history and I suggest that by centering on what Svetlana Boym call reflective rather than restorative nostalgia, the novels are open to and encourage engaging with fragments, marginal communities, and untold stories.

The first section of the dissertation analyzes how representations of the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya, an anticolonial movement waged against the British by the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army from roughly 1952-1960, are revised through the lens of the 2007 post-election violence (PEV)[4] in the novels of Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor (*Dust,* 2013), and Peter Kimani (*The Dance of the Jakaranda,* 2017). I argue that after the communal violence of 2007, when internal divisions become starkly visible, representations of Mau Mau Uprising violence shift from the earlier binary between an anticolonial nationalist imaginary of romanticized figurations of Freedom Fighters as opposed to colonial ascriptions of brutality and atavism to the Uprising, to a more critical exploration of the Uprising's afterlives in the postcolonial period that is attentive to ambiguity and invested in excavating elided histories.

[4] As Daniel Branch explains in *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair* (2011), violence emerged after the 2007 contested election at first based on delays of results and irregularities within the election more broadly, but eventually moving into planned attacks on homes and communities perceived to have supported 'the other side', followed by counter-attacks, which ultimately left more than 1,000 Kenyans dead, and innumerable others raped, displaced, and traumatized. Branch suggests that despite long histories of land dispossession, "in the heat of the moment, of all these different factors, it was ethnicity that was seized up on by many Kenyans in an attempt to understand events" (275).

Whereas earlier writers including Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o romantically represent the Mau Mau as the latest in a long history of unified Kenyan resistance to colonizing forces, contemporary literature shifts its focus to articulating what is silenced in such representations of national history as shared and universal. In *Dust* and *Dance of the Jakaranda,* the authors are invested in marginal characters and their alternative engagements with the nation: those living beyond the scope of the state in Northern Kenya; members of the diaspora; and the indentured laborers from India who came to work on the Railway project in the late 1800s. Along with their investment in marginal characters and communities, the novels are also far more ambivalent about the legacies of the Mau Mau Uprising, variously focusing on the trauma created through its violence and the imperative to forget such trauma in postcolonial Kenya, and the lack of clear organization or conscious strategy in moments of anticolonial resistance that pushes back on claims of an organized revolutionary resistance movement.

In the complex and contradictory nature of their representations of the material histories of violence from the colonial through independence and post-independence periods in Kenya, the novels revise dominant versions of history, and through their emphasis on untold stories, open the possibility for new futures. Encapsulating the imperative to remember, the novels emerging from Kenya after the PEV resist amnesia regarding continuities of violence and present story-telling and acts of creative recuperation as ways to heal from communal violence and re-establish possibilities of unity for the Kenyan collective moving forward. Additionally, they re-imagine the Kenyan collective to include groups not typically included in Kenyan history or literature, and their representations of these marginalized figures emerge as three dimensional and intimate.

One such instance of the novels' recuperations of alternative histories, is the focus of Kimani's *Dance of the Jakaranda* on the Asian community in Kenya, particularly in the anticolonial solidarity that is central in the novel between the Asian and African communities in resisting British efforts at divide and rule, not only on the railway project, but in the political, economic, and spatial organization of colonial Kenya. In his focus on interracial solidarity, Kimani not only takes up the call for revised histories of Kenya and consideration of the constructedness of racial divisions, but additionally, by centering the narrative on the Asian community in the colonial past, he defamiliarizes contemporary ethnic tension while making an appeal to solidarity and unity across Kenyan communities. Through his representations of collective resistance and its impacts, Kimani excavates solidarity as the true history of the Kenyan people – locating the drivers of racial and class tension squarely in the realm of elite colonial and postcolonial leadership, and thereby providing an important intervention into narratives emerging in the wake of the 2007 PEV that focus on ethnic tensions as opposed to the material histories of land dispossession or cross-community solidarity in resistance.[5]

Through their complex engagement with the history of the Mau Mau Uprising and its legacies in the 2007 PEV, in these contemporary novels from Kenya, the authors reframe the national project from strident calls for patriotism based on a top-down insistence on unity through forgetting the past — to a version of national unity that could arise from putting the past to rest by acknowledging past violence and trauma and facing present-day divisions openly and honestly. By interrogating the national project to attend to fissures and elisions, the authors simultaneously begin to deconstruct ethnic tensions,

[5] Catherine Boone, for example, argues, "Much of the world press reported these episodes as outbursts of ethnic violence. A deeper look confirms that for grassroots participants in many localities, the political issue at state was not ethnic power per se, or as an end in itself. Rather as Throup and Hornsby (1998:555) put it, 'land ownership remained at the core of the argument.'"

long considered to be the driver of communal violence, and point to how long histories from the colonial past through the postcolonial present work to enforce and produce such divisions.

The second section of the dissertation focuses on how the Naxalite Movement of 1967-1975, a Maoist-inspired armed struggle against the Indian postcolonial state, and its afterlives in the contemporary Maoist guerilla struggle in India are connected in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri *(The Lowland,* 2014), Neel Mukherjee (*The Lives of Others* 2015, *A State of Freedom,* 2017), and Arundhati Roy (*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* 2017). I argue that the dual focus in these novels of representing historical movements and their connections to contemporary iterations of non-state violence work to make visible the continuity of state violence against the dispossessed that mobilizes resistant violence. The novels' recovery of the social and material contexts for non-state violence, particularly in response to the radicalization of state violence against the dispossessed, highlights continuities between the colonial and postcolonial state, explicitly critiquing the latter and, like the novels from Kenya, interrogating the national project that projects unity while violence affects so many of its citizens. Written in the context of public outcries in response to the excessive violence of Salwa Judum (2005-2011) and Operation Green Hunt (2009-present), which motivated and justified brutal extralegal violence against tribal and adivasi communities in the so-called Red Corridor, these novels attempt to represent what the experience on the other side might look and feel like. Each of the characters who join the Naxalite or Maoist cause are provided with extensive expository backgrounds, punctuated by negative experiences with the state and security forces, their struggles with poverty and lack of options for survival, which I suggest aim to develop a sympathy on the part of the reader for their choice to take up arms. Importantly, since the texts under consideration are pitched and sold to Western

audiences, this sympathy makes an intervention not only into thinking about the Maoist struggle in India, but about the choice to embrace violence as a solution more broadly. I read these novels as making a small but important intervention into war on terror discourse by defamiliarizing the terrorist act by containing it in a relatively unknown conflict (for Western readers) in India.

Additionally, my analysis of the 2017 novels of Roy and Mukherjee emphasizes how the authors center and interrogate the role of gender in the context of revolutionary violence, making important interventions into postcolonial feminist ethics and questions of female empowerment and agency through violence. I argue that while these novels present narratives devoid of real agency for their female guerilla characters, the desire to transmit their stories, experiences, and reasons for joining the Maoists indicate an alternative futurity. I suggest that the representation of such limited agency arises in the historical context of diminished revolutionary potential in the 2017 context after revolution has significantly lost the momentum of the earlier 1960s moment. As Bernard D'Mello claims of the contemporary Maoist struggle in a recent book tracing the history of the movement: "a real revolution in any country on the periphery of the world capitalist system now seemed hard to even conceive of, let along bring about, compared to the "1968" period when the feasibility of radical change was palpable" (170).

As opposed to hope for a successful revolution which animates earlier representations of Naxalite characters from the first (1967) stage of the movement, the female revolutionaries represented by Mukherjee and Roy in 2017 on the fiftieth anniversary of Naxalbari, create a new type of agency through their desire and that of their authors for their experiences to be heard. Distinct but similar to the production of alternative histories in the Kenyan novels of the first section, this desire to be heard, and the authors' investments in representing the experiences of tribal women who turn to the

armed wing of the Maoist party, similarly produces a new understanding of the present moment in India and its connection to colonial and postcolonial histories, in order to prepare for new possibilities in the future. Finally, by framing the female Maoists' narratives within a larger community of narratives and emphasizing the ways in which their stories are transmitted, both to the reader, but also to other characters, the authors establish possibilities of solidarity in novels, in the way they are created, as well as the way in which they are read.

In my analysis of these excavations of alternative histories to prepare for new futures, I suggest that the novels under consideration in these case studies embody a new canon of resistance literature. By employing multiple and entangled temporalities that put the past and present in conversation, they provide an intervention into linear thinking about violence and history in two important ways. First, in their focus on continuities between colonial and postcolonial periods in relation to the material situation of the dispossessed and the persistence of state violence against these communities, I argue these novels interrogate the legitimacy of the postcolonial state, suggesting that the project of decolonization is far from over, and resisting divisive ethnonationalism that mobilizes nostalgia for a past that never existed. Rather, their interrogation of the postcolonial national project can be read as creating a space for a more complex relationship with the nation's and personal histories. Simultaneously, though hope is often evacuated from contemporary non-state violence as represented in the novels, the emphasis on the importance of the transmission of the stories of the dispossessed and those who fall victim to or choose to participate in violence against the state insists on the integration of these voices into larger debates about the future of each country. This alternative national collective transcends typical boundaries between class, caste, race, and gender, and emphasizes the possibilities of solidarity across historical and politically

produced divisions. I read the novels as issuing an imperative to remember and to listen, and as invested in their own projects of transmitting the stories that have been overlooked, forgotten, or not yet told. As such my project suggests that this canon provides the starting point – of looking at the realities of the present and its connection with history in the full face – in order to create a viable future.

Chapter One, "**In Search of the Transformative Imaginary: Literary Representations of Non-State Violence in the Globalized Postcolony"***,* analyzes literature arising in response to the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya[6], focusing on representations of the Mau Mau Uprising which, I highlight, evacuate the liberatory potential of resistant, non-state violence. While previous canonical writing on the Mau Mau Uprising, according to Evan Mwangi, maintained a romanticized imaginary of the Mau Mau, the contemporary novels of Owuor and Kimani present a distinctly critical interpretation. Instead of focusing on the transformative potential of violent resistance as capable of addressing the material and political problems faced by the dispossessed as in the work of Ngũgĩ and Fanon, these novels demythologize the Mau Mau Uprising through representations of the atavism and brutality of its violence, and center on excavating buried and silenced histories. This project is imperative, in their view, due to the silencing of Kenya's violent history, not only during the Mau Mau period, but throughout the postcolonial era, and responds to what fellow author Billy Kahora calls the 'amnesiac collusion' of Kenyan public life.

In their revision of dominant versions of Mau Mau history, including those of the Kenya Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission Report (2013), the authors suggest that any project of national unity and healing requires complex understandings of the

[6] See Branch (2011); Boone (2012)

consequences of Mau Mau violence, and its afterlives in postcolonial Kenya. While this literary revision of Mau Mau history is nonviolent in register, I argue that the excavation of controversial truths, stories, and histories, importantly resists broad conceptualizations that obfuscate the complexity of violence as continuity in Kenyan history. In the texts' insistence on the contradictory nature of truth and history, they provide an alternative conceptualization to that of either romance or illegitimacy, and additionally, to interpretations of post-election violence as an aberration. Finally, though I read the texts as reflecting a critical move away from any valorization of violence, I argue for the capacity of the narrative forms and conflation of violence across time to complicate both the legitimacy of the postcolonial state in its violence and that of the Mau Mau and actors in the PEV. The entangled temporalities of both novels insist on readings of history against the grain and from alternative angles, a project which foregrounds resistance and revisits violence as resistance.

Chapter Two, "Derailing the rail: Indian-Kenyan solidarity in contemporary Anglophone fiction", analyzes representations of Indian-Kenyan solidarity across history, focusing on the construction of the railroad from 1896-1901 as metaphor for colonial and capitalist oppression and simultaneously as a source of collective resistance, and how it carries over into the emergency and Mau Mau period. In *Indians in Kenya* (2015), Sana Aiyar claims that, "[a]n overwhelming emphasis on singular territoriality and racially bounded scholarship on Kenya has resulted in the historiographical marginality of Indians, who are assumed to be historically insignificant" (1). While such elisions are rife within historiography, Aiyar notes "this history has been preserved in the realm of fiction that highlights the intimacy of this encounter, most popularly in 2005 by M. G. Vassanji in his award-winning book The In-Between World of Vikram Lall" (203-4). This chapter takes up a consideration of fictional treatments of the Asian community,

particularly in relation to the building of the Kenyan railroad through a reading of Vassanji's novel alongside Peter Kimani's *Dance of the Jakaranda* (2017). I argue that while Vassanji's novel resonates with Aiyar's claims in its depiction of an ambivalent relationship between Indians and Africans in Kenya, Kimani's novel emphasizes solidarity, making an important and timely intervention into imagining an African national collective in the aftermath of the post-election violence of 2007.

Both novels importantly establish the railway as both an originary source of colonial capitalist exploitation and land dispossession, and as the tie that binds the Indian indentured laborers and their descendants to the land. Yet I read Kimani's novel as going beyond the metaphor of Vassanji, in his representation of the railway as ushering in a clear and determined process of racial balkanization by the British in its construction through their use of divide and rule tactics. This constructed division is belied in the text by a focus on the ways in which the literal railroad is the product of the collective efforts of white, brown, and black hands, and the ways the figurative underground railroad of resistance, including that of the fictionalized Mau Mau Uprising in the text, succeeds only through connections and solidarities between the African and Indian communities. Through his representations of collective resistance and its impacts, Kimani excavates solidarity as the true history of the Kenyan people – locating the drivers of racial and class tension squarely in the realm of elite colonial and postcolonial leadership. I argue that Kimani's novel presents an alternative imaginary of collectivity, which contradicts both earlier literary and historiographical depictions of Indians in Kenya. His project, which aligns with the aims of the Kenya Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission, established after the post-election violence in Kenya, is to recover the silenced histories in Kenya's past.

Chapter Three, "**A Dialectics of Violence: Neel Mukherjee's Naxalite Narrative in the 'Age of Terror'"**, analyzes the political implications of representations of state and non-state violence, especially for Western audiences in the context of the global war on terror in Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others*. I argue that while the novel ends with ambiguity in its final pages, which depict an act of terrorist violence against the civilian community, its register of resistance emerges in two distinct ways. First, the text's representation of the Naxalite movement provides an important corrective to the perceived blind spots in previous naxal novels (Roy's *God of Small Things* (1997); Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013), in its in-depth representation of the social, material, and political contexts of Naxalite violence. Second, the novel stages an intervention in war on terror discourse because its representation of contemporary Maoist violence in India productively defers and defamiliarizes the terrorist act for Western readers, allowing an important excavation of the elided causes of terrorism. The structure of the novel, which focuses on the material, social, and political contexts before the act of terror, counters the motivated use of metalepsis inherent in war on terror discourse, in which an "effect of colonial discourse (here, the terrorist) is presented as a cause; or where a focus on the emotional-aesthetic connotations of terror is made logically to override awareness of the imperial interests that produced terrorism" (Boehmer and Morton, 2010, 11). While the final scene troublingly pulls back on this critique in its implicit demand, in light of an act of terror, for state violence through improved security, I argue that the novel's attention as a whole to the historical contexts and contemporary continuities of the oppression of the peasantry and tribal communities in the postcolony productively complicates, defamiliarizes, and resists Western discursive assumptions about the violence of the dispossessed.

Chapter Four, "Post-Magic: The female Naxalite at 50" examines how representations of and metaphors for the experiences of the female Naxalite have changed over time, focusing on literary representations of female Maoist guerilla fighters active in India today. In Mallarika Sinha Roy's recent book on gender and politics in India, a female interviewee describes the years of her participation in the Naxalite movement in the late 1960s, "[t]hose were the best days of my life . . ." she says, "in those years I lived as a human being . . . *seta chillo ekta ashchorjyo somoy* (Those were *magic moments*)" (x). The import of this metaphor, Sinha Roy explains, is its ability to "convey [the] duality" of "[p]ersecution, pain and tribulation" along with "wonder, surprise and hope" (xi). The Naxalite Movement, as well as the earlier Telengana People's Struggle of 1946-1951, are often represented in this way, with women highlighting what they call "the magic of that time" (Kannabiran and Lalitha). The magic, or "wonder, surprise, and hope" which inhere in the early Naxalite and Telengana movements are tied for female participants to the potential of revolution to address, not only social and political, but also their gendered experiences of oppression.

This chapter argues that the representation of the contemporary female Naxalite, in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and in Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others* (2014) and *A State of Freedom* (2017) reflect a shift away from the hope nostalgically associated with the earlier movements, to what I am calling a "post-magic" perspective on revolutionary violence. No longer focused on the hope for or potential of a successful revolution, the post-magic perspective on Maoist violence in *Ministry* is instead attentive to both the flaws of the Maoist movement and the persistence of structures of inequality and the radicalization of state violence in contemporary India. The specificity of the gendered Naxalite experience in the novel enables this dual critique, which I argue foregrounds the fundamental challenge posed by the globalized,

postcolonial world: an ideological impasse between revolutionary violence, which cannot win, and nonviolence which does not work. As opposed to earlier movement's hope – contemporary revolutionary violence is read as flawed and ineffective yet presented by those sympathetic with the reasons for it, as the only viable response for tribal communities being annihilated by the state.

Though the Mau Mau Uprising and the Naxalite movement arise from vastly different historical and material backgrounds, they generate similar responses from contemporary writers, indicating an emerging form of resistance literature that works to demythologize historical revolutionary violence and to complicate linear conceptions of violence across history, blurring lines between sides and across periods in order to generate more complex understandings of violence in the contemporary moment. A critical engagement with this new form of resistant literary imaginaries provides an important supplement not only to the field of postcolonial studies, but to literatures of South Asia, Africa, and the study Global Anglophone novel more broadly. As in Wai Chee Dimock's analysis of the "supplement" and "corrective" literature can provide to legal and philosophical debates around justice, this project suggests that in grappling with violent histories and their continuities in the present, literature is uniquely capable of capturing the residues of history which may transform possible visions for the future (10).

The excavation of these alternative histories - of the social and material reasons for peasant insurgency in Mukherjee; of moments of cross-ethnic and cross-racial solidarity overlooked by dominant history in Kimani; of the personal legacies of traumatic history from the emergency period in Kenya in Owour; of the life experiences and expectancies of female guerilla fighters in India today - creates new opportunities for thinking about what kind of nation, world, and future such alternative histories might produce. One thing seems certain - in light of the rapid increase in ethnonationalist

movements across the world and increasing evidence of violence against minorities within national boundaries and across global borders - a focus on complexity, solidarity, and the value of sharing one's story emerges as a necessary antidote to existing flattening or romanticized narratives of national nostalgia.[7] This literature, as I will demonstrate, offers a different kind of history - one that is messy, that is difficult - but must be faced, grappled with, and ultimately put to rest in order to move forward.

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[7] What I have in mind in terms of flattening narratives of national nostalgia are those emerging in ethno-nationalist populist politics across the globe, but especially visible in the UK and the US as analyzed by Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris in their 2017 article "Trump and Populist-Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse." For a more broad definition of restorative nationalist nostalgia, see Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001).

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Chapter 1: In Search of the Transformative Imaginary: Literary Representations of Non-State Violence in the Globalized Postcolony[8]

Though revolutionary violence and the violence of the dispossessed gained a liberatory valence in its theorization during the anticolonial era by a wide range of writers, including Frantz Fanon, the liberatory aspects of such violence have significantly diminished after decolonization. Yet, while theoretical justifications for the violence of the dispossessed have waned in the postcolonial era, the fundamental rights for which such violence was waged, in many postcolonies, have arguably remained foreclosed. Issues of land distribution, human rights, and the excesses and brutality of state violence and corruption largely carry over from the colonial to independence eras. Though the primary success of decolonization of putting the indigenous people of a country into state power, has been achieved, the nature of that power has maintained the inequitable structures that were at the heart of the justification of violence by the dispossessed under colonial authority.

Several examples highlight the dominant assumption of the illegitimacy of the violence of the dispossessed and the extension of blanket justifications for the excesses and brutality of state violence that bear a marked resemblance to the coercive strategies of colonial rule. Contemporary national liberation movements in Palestine and Kashmir are routinely discredited due to their use of violence, while unspeakable state violence against citizens is given a pass, especially in connection with establishing security in the war on terror era.[9] India's counterinsurgency tactics against Maoist guerilla fighters

[8] A version of this chapter was previously published as "In Search of the Transformative Imaginary: Literary Representations of Non-Sate Violence in the Globalized Postcolony" *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies,* 20.5 (2018): 605-622.

[9] In this periodization I am interested in the state of emergency status that is mobilized to justify all manner of counter-insurgency policies and actions of the state, drawing on the definitions and histories offered by

through the state's material support of the notorious Salwa Judum, and later visible in the government's Operation Green Hunt, for example, have resulted in the widespread burning of villages and relocation of adivasis to IDP camps, as well as numerous allegations of extra-legal killings, rape, and torture of adivasi[10] communities (Mukherji). State violence in this example closely resembles colonial strategies, from the tactic of strategic hamleting in response to insurgencies, to extra-legal forms of extreme state violence in acts of rape, torture, and murder (Roy, 2012).

A wide range of postcolonial thinkers has called for a critical examination of the continuities between colonial and postcolonial forms of state violence. Achille Mbembe, in his definition of the term postcolony, intends to draw a direct connection between the political practices of colonial governments and their continued use after independence, suggesting that material conditions for the people today are not dissimilar to those experienced under colonialism (2001). In a related project, Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton argue that understanding forms of terror in the postcolonial present,

> requires that we turn back to the colonial archive of violence, and repression, to records of the colonial formations of sovereignty, policy, and surveillance, which find such prominent afterlives in counter-terroristic formations today", and to various forms of resistance to such formations, including insurgency (7).

The pattern that emerges from these brief examples is the continued deployment of colonial strategies of state violence and terror, which, because deployed by the independent state, maintain an aura of acceptability that is belied by the quality and

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Stephen Morton in *States of Emergency: Colonialism, Literature and Law* (2013), Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton in *Terrorism and the Postcolonial: A Concise Companion* (2009), and Arjun Appadurai's conceptualization of the war on terror as global rather than national in scale and the consequences of this shift in scope in *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (2006)

[10] The adivasi, or tribal/indigenous communities in India have been particularly hard hit by resource extraction projects due to the contestation that arises between mining and other transnational companies with local adivasi communities over land.

quantity of force used. The legitimacy of the postcolonial state and its monopoly on violence is called into question when the state has maintained colonial strategies of excessive state violence against its citizens, and when its violence is perceived as not contained, and thereby justified, by legal frameworks. The assumption of the state's monopoly on violence rests on even shakier ground when the legacy of the state in the postcolony is based on non-state actors deploying violence against the state for rights and resources that never materialized at independence.

Further, the violence of the dispossessed has not simply vanished after decolonization, as is clear from contemporary history. Instead, such violence is increasingly visible in individual acts of terror and in communal inter-ethnic conflict, which, though inextricably linked to historical and political processes of dispossession, is no longer mobilized by the liberatory and transformative ideologies that drove the militancy of anticolonial movements. The 2007/8 post-election violence (PEV) in Kenya is one such example, which led to 1,133 deaths, thousands of cases of rape, and the displacement of at least 500,000 people (Branch, 2011). What such events demonstrate is that violence is already there – an unquestionable reality experienced by the dispossessed through both epistemic and state violence in daily life. Violence has become, as suggested by Gyanendra Pandey, albeit in a different context, "a total social phenomenon" (7).

The shift in the violence of the dispossessed that occurs in the postcolonial era relates to the targets of violence. In *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), Arjun Appadurai explains the increase of instances of communal ethnic violence by analyzing the rise of a fear of the minority within the nation state. He suggests that globalization creates an anxiety in postcolonial states and in majority groups about their marginality in the world and national economic order. This perceived weakness of the nation state and majority

groups results in an increasing fear of the minorities within its own borders, and leads to the desire to exterminate such familiar or proximate enemies. While he highlights that the real enemy is globalization itself, he notes that globalization diverges from the colonial situation in no longer having a tangible figure to attack. Whereas, in the colonial era, the figure of the settler-colonist would be a rational target for violence, in the era of globalization the dispossessed turn on their neighbors, who, in their difference, come to represent fears generated by the economic impacts of globalization and the politico-economic problems of the postcolonial state.

This combination of a persistence of colonial forms of violence, and issues of land dispossession and economic inequality that serve to question the legitimacy of the postcolonial state, and the increasing outbreaks of new forms of violence by the dispossessed, point to the exigency of critically examining assumptions about and representations of non-state violence. We are, as Priyamvada Gopal suggests, at an impasse between revolutionary violence that has lost legitimacy and viability, and nonviolence that does not adequately address the violence inherent in the daily life of the dispossessed in the postcolonial state. The question then becomes, what is to be done when nonviolence does not work and violence cannot win?

In order to explore responses to this impasse, this chapter examines writing after the PEV in Kenya as an example of this new form of the violence of the dispossessed and its connections to and continuities from the colonial era. The literary responses to and investigative reporting on the PEV have highlighted a pattern of insufficient acknowledgement, in both state and public spheres, of violence and its continuities and causes throughout Kenyan history. To address this elision of Kenya's violent history, writers have attempted to create a space for such histories to be uncovered, excavating silenced stories that have long been submerged in what Billy Kahora, the editor of the

Kenyan literary journal *Kwani?*, describes as the "amnesiac collusion" of Kenyan public life (*Kwani 5* vol. 2, 8).

This chapter begins with an overview of literary representations of the Mau Mau Uprising in early literary texts, before examining shifts in such representations emerging after the 2007 PEV. I suggest that contemporary Kenyan literature can be read as ascribing to the discursive assumption elaborated by Gopal, which delegitimizes the violence of the dispossessed, without imagining resistance or alternative transformative strategies that might demonstrably redress the material and political problems faced by the dispossessed in Kenya after independence which give rise to the PEV in the first place (Branch; Boone). In this way, the novels analyzed in this chapter deviate from earlier canonical writing on the Mau Mau Uprising as reflected in the writings of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and mark a significant change in the content of Kenyan literature. Yet despite the loss of a transformative imaginary emerging from the potentials of resistant violence, I ultimately argue that the shift in focus to engaging with the complexities and contradictions of historical 'truth,' and the authors' investment in the "controversial 'here and now'" marks the novels' resistant registers (Harlow 1987, 16), and provides a future-oriented space for healing as a nation after the divisiveness of ethnic communal violence.

Mythologizing the Mau Mau: Ngũgĩ's canonical Representations

Debates over the Mau Mau Uprising and its representations are reflective of larger debates that center on a primary contestation between romanticized support for violent resistance and the ascription of illegitimacy to such violence by focusing on its brutality. Evan Mwangi argues that in literature, "[t]he dominant Kenyan imaginary presents Mau Mau as the ultimate symbol of ordinary people's bravery and resolve to wrest power from

colonialists toward political self determination", an image which he claims "is especially found in the fiction of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o." Many critics have acknowledged this heroic representation of the Mau Mau in Ngũgĩ's fictional works, and have drawn attention to the relation to the Mau Mau Uprising of Ngũgĩ's stated ideological position in a 1963 review that "[v]iolence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery; it purifies man" (as quoted in Maughan-Brown, 244). Particularly, representations of the Mau Mau in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), and *Petals of Blood* (1977) have been read by critics as supportive of not only the viability, but the necessity of the violence of the dispossessed to address political and economic inequality (Maughan-Brown; Oyeniyi).

Ngũgĩ is engaged with a different, though related project, to contemporary writers after the PEV, and his works can be read as establishing a particularly Kenyan 'truth' of history which addresses and corrects misconceptions and misrepresentations, especially from colonial histories of the Mau Mau, to conceive of a liberatory and heroic image of Kenya's ongoing struggle against the joint powers of capitalism and coloniality. As such, his representation of Mau Mau violence, though at times ambivalent, ends up framing such violence as the morally 'correct' choice in a time where one had to choose a side. Simultaneously, his writing on the Mau Mau in the post-independence period extends the need for resistance past the moment of the anticolonial struggle, and works to sustain the possibilities and potentials of unified resistance against foreign imperialism and capitalist interests. While grappling with the disappointment and disillusion of independence, his texts still fully articulate and imagine the winners and losers in both colonial and postcolonial history in Kenya that is absent from the contemporary novels under consideration in this chapter which are far more ambivalent in their representations of violence than are Ngũgĩ's plays and novels from the 1970s.

The play, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), for example, responds to the elision in literary and historical accounts of the anti-colonial struggle by resurrecting and revising the figure of Kimathi as a hero of the Kenyan people, but also as connected more broadly to resistance movements across Africa against imperialism. Ngũgĩ and Mugo describe the play as "an imaginative recreation and interpretation of the collective will of the Kenyan peasants and workers in their refusal to break under sixty years of colonial torture and ruthless oppression by the British ruling classes and their continued determination to resist exploitation, oppression and new forms of enslavement […] So the challenge was to truly depict the masses (symbolized by Kimathi) in the only historically correct perspective; positively, heroically and as the true makers of history" (4-5).

Through the character of Kimathi, Ngũgĩ and Mugo take on and reject common claims about the Mau Mau Uprising that cast it as a regional and tribal conflict rather than a national liberation struggle, and those which characterize Kimathi as a brutal leader. In their stead, Ngũgĩ and Mugo cast the Mau Mau Uprising as deeply connected with previous struggles, and also one that encapsulates all Kenyans across all regions. The main claim is that the Mau Mau struggle is 1) necessary in its violence as the "only justice under imperialism comes through revolutionary struggle against it" and 2) that the struggle ought to be of all Kenyans united in the struggle rather than through ethnic or familial relationships. Kimathi's final call for unity in the face of oppression and exploitation reaffirms the desire of the authors to emphasize solidarity across the sides of this struggle, expand the scope beyond the Kikuyu, and push for unified African resistance to foreign imperialism and capitalist interests.

These themes are consistent in Ngũgĩ's fictional accounts of the Mau Mau, including a focus on land expropriation, the casual and systematic brutality of British rule

and Home Guard collaboration, and gestures toward the heroism and long history of Kenyan resistance that the Mau Mau Uprising both arises from and extends. *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *Grain of Wheat* (1967), and *Petals of Blood* all contain these themes, though *Petals of Blood* is commonly recognized as most clearly representative of Ngũgĩ's true ideological interpretation of the Uprising and the state of Kenya. As David Maughan-Brown notes, in comparison to *Petals of Blood*, the first two novels are "determined by an aesthetic ideology that demands 'objectivity', the presentation of all points of view, and, above all, that the writer be 'non-political'" (1981). Suggesting that Ngũgĩ's true view on violence is the one he expresses in a 1963 review that "Violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery; it purifies man. Violence to protect and serve and unjust, oppressive, social order is criminal and diminishes man", Maughan-Brown claims that this militancy doesn't emerge in Ngũgĩ's fiction until *Petals of Blood.*

Petals of Blood also emphasizes the need to choose a side, highlighting the tensions between colonialism and anti-colonial resistance as well as the post-independence framing of the tension between capital and labor. In the novel, Ngũgĩ situates Mau Mau resistance within a long history of the struggle of black people globally and as the inspiration for the mobilization of the dispossessed in the novel in the journey of the inhabitants of Ilmorog to the capital to demand support during the drought. The novel ends with hope – the pregnancy of Wanja, and the resurgence of violent resistance as Abdullah, the main Mau Mau hero of the novel imagines a long history of resistance carried forward from the past into the present:

> Maybe . . . maybe, he thought, history was a dance in a huge arena of God. You played your part, whatever your chosen part, and then you left the arena, swept aside by the waves of a new step, a new movement in the dance. Other dancers,

> younger, brighter, more inventive came and played with even greater skill, with more complicated footwork, before they too were swept aside by yet a greater tide in the movement they had helped create, and other dancers were thrown up to carry the dance to even newer heights and possibilities undreamt of by an earlier generation (404).

Ngũgĩ's insistence on the material political and economic realities of the peasants and workers in Kenya, and his belief that the only historically correct perspective is that of the heroism of the masses and their ability to create their own history through resistance, and his capacity to maintain this vision well into the independent period is laudable, but also possibly predicated on the specificity of the timing of his writing, most of which, in relation to the Mau Mau Uprising, is published in the 1970s and 1980s when the spirit of global resistance was still strong and hopeful.[11]

The clear articulation of the need to choose sides, and the specificity of a clear enemy centered on the figures of capitalism and colonialism, of necessity give way after 1989 and the global impulse to lose focus on revolutionary struggles in the face of a new set of neoliberal threats and enemies. As Appadurai argues, in the era of globalization, the specific figure of the enemy gives way, and globalization itself becomes the figure one must fight against, a fight that becomes turned against 'intimate enemies' within the national space, in instances of ethnic tension and communal violence precisely such as the 2007 PEV.

Representations of the Mau Mau Uprising after the PEV, on the other hand, as I will demonstrate in the following sections, are decidedly nonviolent in register, largely revising the heroic representation of the Uprising that emerges in canonical anticolonial

[11] See, for example, Vijay Prashad's explanation of changes to the Third World Project before and after 1989 in *The Poorer Nations* (2012).

texts. These romanticized representations of the Mau Mau, like those of Ngũgĩ, play into the Fanonian assertion that such instances of revolutionary violence are a source of unity and dignity. In contemporary writing after the PEV, this conception is refigured in the suggestion that human dignity and national unity will come, not from violent resistance and the establishment of the human subject through a transformation of the existing political and economic system, but from telling one's story as a way to heal from recent violence.

This reconceptualization of dignity and unity as a way to address the PEV, emerges from a recognition that romanticizing the violence of the Mau Mau, in both literary and state forums, has historically elided its consequences and afterlives, and played a role in maintaining the divisions from which communal violence arises in the independence era. In their refusal to follow the dominant canonical approach of nostalgia and heroism when it comes to Mau Mau fighters, contemporary authors insist on complex understandings of the Uprising's contradictions and alternative histories, and link this imperative to the path ahead for Kenya after the PEV. Rather than focusing on 'The Kenya We Want', an articulation developed by the government in response to post election violence and ethnic conflict, Billy Kahora enjoins his fellow writers to instead address 'The Kenya We Live In', a project taken up in the novels of both Owour and Kimani (Vol. 2, 9). Focusing on what Harlow calls "the controversial 'here and now'" central to the project of resistance literature, these writers push back on the tradition of both canonical literary texts and government rallying cries to imagine a bright future, insisting instead on understanding the present moment by revisiting and revising Kenya's recent history.

Mau Mau and/after the PEV

The PEV in Kenya generated a call to address past violence and injustices in Kenya's history, and led to the establishment of the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission, tasked with "compiling a complete and accurate history of historical injustices and gross violations of human rights" in the period since independence (vol. I, iv). The final report, published in 2013, posits the PEV as both a trauma for the nation, and an occasion for healing through an examination of the systematic failure and abuse of the independent state:

> The violence, bloodshed and destruction of the PEV shocked Kenyans into the realization that their nation, long considered an island of peace and tranquility, remained deeply divided since independence from British colonial rule in December 1963. It prompted a fresh opportunity for the country to examine the negative practices of the past five decades that contributed to a state that still holds sway in Kenya: normalization and institutionalization of gross violation of human rights, abuse of power and misuse of public office (vol. I, vi).

The PEV is analyzed in the TJRC Report as arising from ethnic tensions, primarily stemming from the actions of the colonial state in response to the Mau Mau Uprising, which resulted in significant land dispossession, and the use of extreme and brutal violence against the African community. Catherine Boone persuasively argues that the PEV, rather than being primarily driven by ethnic tensions, was the result of the failure of state land distribution policies, which continue to create winners and losers in independent Kenya. Calling the Mau Mau Uprising, the "key event in Kenya's history", the TJRC Report aligns with Boone's analysis, suggesting that the British response created "conflicts over land that remain the cause and driver of conflict and ethnic tension in Kenya today" (vol. I, viii-ix).

Along with its failures to follow through on land distribution reforms after independence, the postcolonial government (particularly the Kenyatta and Moi administrations) is also read as adopting the strategies and modalities of state violence developed in the emergency period against the Mau Mau. The Report finds that colonial counter-insurgency tactics mobilized against the Mau Mau were used as state strategies in the period since independence. In their investigation of gross violations of human rights in the colonial period, they find that in the "twin processes of screening and interrogation [during the emergency] the most astonishing evidence of widespread and institutionalized torture has emerged. The military would continue to use similar brutal tactics way into the post-independence era" (vol. I, xi). Far from independence signaling an end to colonial modalities of state violence, "the practices adopted by the police and military forces in independent Kenya are starkly similar to those employed by the same forces during the colonial period" (vol. I, x).

In highlighting the failures of the postcolonial state to address land dispossession and illegitimate forms of state violence after independence, the Report suggests that the reasons for which the Mau Mau Uprising occurred remain of significance today, and that the expectations and hopes for independence after the Mau Mau struggle "never materialized" (vol. I, ix). This reading is supported by the representation in the Report of the Mau Mau fighters, which reads similarly to the canonical literary representation of the Mau Mau as heroic in its declaration that "[i]ndependence was made possible by the gallant Kenyan men and women who risked and sacrificed their lives and limbs fighting for freedom from colonial rule" (vol. I, 3). The Mau Mau Uprising is explicitly figured here as nationalist and anticolonial, pushing back on arguments that the Mau Mau Uprising was a singularly Kikuyu struggle or a civil rather than anticolonial war. The Mau Mau Uprising is, for the writers of the Report, both cross-ethnic and anticolonial,

the "only concerted and determined violent effort by Africans from across the ethnic divide" (vol. IIB, 196).

The Report's representation of the Mau Mau Uprising as the apex of national and anticolonial resistance is a reversal from Kenyatta and Moi era government perspectives, and marks the desire of the Commission to mobilize the romanticized image of the Mau Mau to identify with the heroism of those fighting against the inequality and brutality of colonial rule at a moment when they indict previous administrations as largely maintaining the colonial status quo.[12] Scholars of truth and reconciliation commissions highlight the interested political stakes of this type of report. Mark Sanders, for example, claims such reports are "born out of political compromise" (2), while Priscilla B. Hayner elaborates that commission reports are "used either to demonstrate or underscore a break with a past record of human rights abuses, to promote national reconciliation, and/or to obtain or sustain political legitimacy" (607). The Kenya TJRC report follows this model, indicating a break from past human rights abuses by focusing primarily of the abuses of the British, along with the Kenyatta, Moi regimes, as the primary perpetrators. Given that all three had a conflictual relationship with the Mau Mau, it follows that in reframing representations of the Uprising to center on a romantic, idealized image, the report further emphasizes its break from the past, mobilizing the idealized imagery of the Mau Mau to establish political legitimacy in affirming the accomplishments of what they present as an apex of Kenyan nationalism within the movement.

This romantic view of the Mau Mau Uprising as primarily nationalist, cross-ethnic and successful, elides the ambiguity and contradictions inherent in local histories of the conflict. Historian Daniel Branch has argued that is precisely the enforced silence

[12] For more detailed analysis on this history, see Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau: Creating Kenya* (2009) and *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair* (2011).

on Mau Mau history during the Kenyatta and Moi eras that creates more heroic renderings of it to counter dominant political discourse. He suggests that the Uprising is best read as a civil war during which people chose sides based on complex local situations and argues that such choices were "informed as much by the lived experience of previous violence as by any pre-war sympathies" (2009, 20) In Branch's reading, the Mau Mau Uprising, as civil war, requires an understanding of Kenya not only as a post-colonial, but a post-conflict society, and he points out that "private memories of war are (or at least were) far more contradictory and painful than the public memory of a great nationalist struggle suggest" (2009, 211).

While the TJRC Report largely glosses over the contradictory nature of Mau Mau history and memory in its idealized imagery, contemporary literature engages with precisely the complex and private memories of war Branch is interested in excavating, establishing an alternative literary imaginary of Mau Mau history and its effects on contemporary Kenyan society. While the literary authors focus, as does the TJRC, on uncovering buried histories and offering dignity and unity through story-telling and truth as a way to heal and tentatively move forward, the novels I analyze reject and revise the flattening romantic perspective on Mau Mau violence, indicating the imperative to critically examine Kenya's history of violence, as well as its contemporary figurations.

Representations of the Mau Mau in Contemporary Literature after PEV

The aims of the two-volume issue of *Kwani? 5* (2008) are elaborated by editor Billy Kahora in his opening editorial, "it is our hope that, taken together, these testimonials articulate an essential quality all countries have to accept before they can work as a nation: unity" (Vol. 1, 22). The themes of the volumes' writings, which

include fiction, non-fiction, and poetry, center on the silenced stories of Kenyans, and the perceived inability to talk about past and current violence. In his editorial to the second volume of the issue, Kahora enjoins his fellow writers to reject the "amnesiac collusion" of Kenyan public life, claiming that "we talk about what we want as we skirt the real" (vol. 2, 9). Binyavanga Wainana similarly casts the role of the writer as resistant and necessarily centered on facing the contemporary reality of Kenya: "It is being suggested everywhere that the Post Election madness was a sort of anomaly, let us go back to where we were and it will be alright. As writers, we have said no to this: we have to look at what happened in the full-face" (vol. 2, 17).

What stands out in these volumes, in comparison to the novels *Dust* (2014) and *Dance of the Jakaranda* (2017), is the near complete absence of the Mau Mau Uprising. This could in part be due to the temporal immediacy of the publication of the volumes after the PEV, whereas writers of novels that were in process during the PEV were published several years later. Yet, the traces which emerge are significant, suggesting that the authors who mention Mau Mau history see in it a symbol of the failures of the independent state, which has made Mau Mau fighters, along with the struggles of the dispossessed invisible, a failure one author suggests is the direct cause of the PEV.

The first reference to Mau Mau history arises in "Benediction in Oyugis", by David Kaiza, where a visitor to Nairobi contemplates the statue of Kimathi, erected after the 2002 elections in a moment when, after the repression of the Moi era, the author depicts the "euphoria" of "a kind of second independence for Kenya", a euphoria based on hopes for reform which history shows us, once again, never materialized. Addressing the belatedness of the statue's erection, the narrator reflects, "[t]hat a post-colonial country got the courage to celebrate his life only five decades later and not at independence says a lot about the country's ambivalence about the difficult choices it

failed to make […] it is to restate that it's Not Yet Uhuru" (vol. 1, 120). The failure of the post-colonial state to celebrate Kimathi's life is doubled here – in its failure to recognize the fighters, and to address the material stakes for which the Uprising was fought.

This theme of the invisibility in connection to the Mau Mau resurfaces in the same volume in the story "Unsettled", by Kalundi Serumaga, in which the narrator's memories of growing up in Kenya include a story about a woman who goes mad after witnessing and falling victim to violence at the hands of her stepfather. The narrator connects her madness to the madness of her uncle, a former Mau Mau fighter, who succumbed to madness after detention. The narrator describes the lack of interest and curiosity about this Mau Mau fighter, and juxtaposes such disinterest with the money spent on Uhuru celebrations, highlighting the failures of the both the public and the state to acknowledge the fighters of the independence movement, as they engage in triumphalist celebrations of independence without attending to the material benefits independence was meant to bring, or honoring the fighters who brought it into being. Describing the madness of the Mau Mau fighter's niece, the narrator connects the invisibility that inheres in her madness to that of her uncle, the country as a whole, and the poverty that persists after independence: "[l]ike Kenya, her demons have trapped her in a past she cannot escape, because nobody can talk about it. It is made invisible. So is she. So was her uncle. So has the real secret history of the violence that forms the foundation of independence in Kenya and the violent poverty thereafter" (vol. 1, 178). The violence of poverty is later directly linked to the experience of invisibility by the dispossessed of Kenya, and as the cause of the PEV,

> Poverty was the violence that plagued the country long before the post-election violence, ensuring that such violence would one day occur. It is violence in its

> very worst form […] It is violence at the deepest psychological, spiritual, and emotional levels, long before it becomes visible. I know. I've been there. Invisible. […] No wonder they had to attempt visibility by becoming a vast, rioting, murderous nuisance whose two week rampage gave rise to expressions of grief, shock, anger and disbelief from the Kenyan intelligentsia in a way that has left me truly mystified. Have they not been paying attention? (vol. 1, 185-6).

By tracing the connection between the invisibility of the Mau Mau fighter after independence to the invisibility of the dispossessed and the violence of their poverty leading up to the PEV, the implicit suggestion is that this new, "worst form" of violence is the direct result of the failure of the state to make the demands of the Mau Mau freedom fighters visible by addressing poverty and land dispossession. Such a view can be read in direct conversation with the TJRC Report, which effectively mobilizes romantic and heroic views of the Mau Mau fighters, but not reform to address the fundamental issues of poverty and inequality.

The urgency to make the Mau Mau, their struggle and its causes, as well as the struggles and desires of the dispossessed, visible, is clearly imperative. The volumes of *Kwani? 5*, in contrast to the TJRC Report, focus on the call to establish and face realities, a project which encourages acknowledging and making visible the violence experienced by the dispossessed, and the ways these experiences are elided as history gets reframed and refigured by the political elite. Though the focus on healing as the imperative goal for Kenya after the PEV, in *Kwani? 5*, along with the novels *Dust* (2014) and *Dance of the Jakaranda* (2017), remains within the register of nonviolence, this attention to the historical conditions of production for the 'here and now' in Kenya after the PEV makes an important and resistant intervention by demythologizing romantic views of history as a

model for a similarly critical engagement with the violence of the present, a project also taken up in novels written in the aftermath of the PEV.

Dust, by Yvonne Adhiambo Owour, opens with the death of Odidi Oganda during the PEV in Kenya, which served as inspiration for the novel (Musiitwa). Odidi's death serves to bring his sister, Ajany, home from Brazil, and his family together to try to understand his death, but also to understand their own histories, which end up closely following Kenya's own, from the Mau Mau Uprising, through Mboya's assassination, to the PEV. Owour depicts both the weight and strength of the silences surrounding this history, and the book seeks to expose those secrets as a way for the characters to heal from their traumatic pasts. The focus on healing through acts of memory, creation, story-telling, and forgiveness, provide a nuanced approach to the psychological recovery of the novel's characters, and successfully imagine the possibility of healing through an excavation of silenced histories in opposition to romanticizing the past.

Dust, as distinct from the heroic representations of the Mau Mau in the TJRC report and in earlier canonical literary texts, frames Mau Mau violence as atavistic, brutal, and undifferentiated from state violence in the colonial and post-independence periods, and well as from the PEV. The PEV with which the novel opens is characterized as "unfinished Kenyan business" (257), and directly tied to the horrors of the past. Nyipir Oganda, Odidi and Ajany's father, who fought with the British against the Mau Mau, connects the PEV violence with the violence of the emergency period when he hears of a family being burned alive after the vote-counting:

> He has seen this before. Touched it. Hidden it. His mind tumbles back to a different time, when brother, son, mother, father sealed family members in rooms and huts and set these alight in honor of covenants of terror that guaranteed silence: "If I speak, may the oath kill me. Much later, the horror was painted over

> and replaced with myths of triumph, repeated, repeated again, then adorned in all seasons of retelling. Nyipir waited for the inheritors of these silences to call out the names of their undead. Not a word. Now, fifty years later, the murdered were shrieking from earth tombs of enforced, timeless stillness, wailing for their forgotten, chopped-up lives. They seemed to accuse every citizen inheritors of their hemorrhaging (83-4).

The representation of Mau Mau violence casts it as "an internecine war" (90) - in this passage characterized by family members killing other family members and imagery of "chopped up" and "hemorrhaging" bodies. Further, the passage suggests that it is precisely this atavistic history of the Mau Mau Uprising which is connected to, even the cause of, the contemporary violence of the PEV moment, as the those entombed in silence and forgotten fifty years ago, arise to haunt and "accuse" Kenyan citizens.

Throughout the novel, it is difficult to differentiate between the sides of the conflict – "every citizen" is accused of the violence of the Mau Mau period. In its interest to make Kenya as a whole guilty for the violence of the past, the text's language pulls back from parsing which side commits which violent act in its narration. In the above passage, for example, though the violence appears to be ascribed to the Mau Mau in its association with the oath, Nyipir, fighting on the side of the colonial state, also frequently connects the oath with his own participation in the violence of the emergency period. The first time he mentions his role during this period to his daughter, he describes his connection to Special Branch member and colonial settler Hugh Bolton,

> We shared . . . trouble. […] "The thing . . . Mau Mau . . ." Ajany shifts, bows puckering. What? Creaky-voiced: "And if I should speak, may the oath kill me…" "What? she asks again. Silence's oaths, slow-dripping venom with their seductive promise of memory loss. Erasure of secrets, as long as the oath was fed

> in intermittent seasons with spilled human blood. "Ahhh! We bury evil with covenants of silence." Nyipir says, "For the good of the country (68).

Nyipir's connection of the oath of silence to his own history of violence working with the Special Branch obscures the specificity of its historical association with the Mau Mau. The oath in the era of the Mau Mau Uprising is disconnected from the mobilization of resistance against British colonialism and becomes symbolic of how silence and its "seductive promise of memory loss" inheres across the sides of conflict in Kenyan history. The final line affirms the similarity of the violence of both the state and anticolonial fighters, suggesting that bodies were buried, and silenced "for the good of the country", a line that could as easily be attributed to the Mau Mau fighters as to the colonial government.

This undifferentiated representation of violence in the emergency period resurfaces towards the end of the book, when, after finally burying the body of Hugh Bolton, Nyipir is more forthright about his exact role during the Uprising: "'We hunted men,' Nyipir adds. The addiction. 'This kind of thing does not end right.' Silence. Yet in Nyipir's mind, turbulence. Scarred memories of a patriot with a wire around his scrotum that would be pulled at another man's whim, for the sake of the nation" (271). Again, any specificity relating to the sides or time period of the Mau Mau conflict slides into continuity. Though he begins by outlining his activities in the emergency era, Nyipir's reference to "memories of a patriot with wire around his scrotum" could reference either the kind of interrogation techniques used by the Special Branch in their fight against the Mau Mau, (Anderson; Elkins) or Nyipir's own experience of this mode of torture at the hands of the post-independent government. Kenyan history thus emerges as a continuity of violence and silence, in which both temporal particularity, and the specificities of conflicts and the sides of the fighters, are blurred.

By emphasizing this continuity through the colonial and postcolonial periods, Owour's complex novel responds to the PEV by revising Kenyan history to draw out violence, from any quarter, and silence by all, as the primary crises facing Kenya. In addressing these crises, the novel engages in a healing process attained through memory, story-telling, and acts of trust and creation by its characters, which are similar to the work of the novel itself. Such personal and aesthetic responses are important, even imperative after PEV, and seem to point to a middle path between the romanticizing historical violence or the refusal of attending to the material sociopolitical and historical contexts of contemporary communal violence that is so often written off as a momentary aberration rather than reflective of reality in need of critical examination.

Dance of the Jakaranda, by Peter Kimani, is similarly attentive to the long arc of Kenyan history since colonialism, with sections of the narrative shuttling between the building of the railroad by the British in 1897-1901, and the period leading to independence in 1963. The novel explores the dynamics of race, identity, and imperial exploitation through the connections between its characters, including Edward McDonald, a settler colonialist who oversees the work of the railroad and stays on in the Rift Valley after independence, Babu Salim, one of the 30,000 indentured Indian workers engaged in the construction of the Railway, and Nyundo, an African drummer who mobilizes the workers and later joins the resistance against the British. Kimani has stated that the novel is centered on race relations and the impacts of imperialism on the "African collective" which "the novel seeks to confirm" (Carrol), and his book is a prescient exploration of issues of identity and belonging, marking a new interest in examining the non-African communities of Kenya.

Kimani, like Owour, was at work on the novel when the PEV occurred, after which "[h]e didn't touch the story for four years as he struggled over the weighty

question of what was making Kenyans turn on their neighbors" (Grubel). In addressing this profound question in the aftermath of the PEV, Kimani's text engages with history and truth, frequently drawing the reader's attention to the complexity and contradictory nature of these concepts. Events in the novel are told in multiple versions, with the narrator alerting the reader at various times that "myth and history often intersect[ed] so what happened is often uncertain" (47; 52). As the novel explores the various versions of events that occur in the novel, the narrator emerges in the privileged position of knowing the "truth", often addressing the reader after one version of a story with lines like, "[s]o to lay the debate to rest, here's the true version of the events of that day" (58). The impulse to uncover the truth of events as they actually happened coincides with that of the writing in *Kwani? 5* and in Owour's novel, and explicitly positions the narrator as having the unique capacity to distinguish between myth and truth in Kenya's history. From this privileged position of knowledge, the narrator then casts organized resistant violence as either futile against the power and terroristic tendencies of the state, or as accidental, and thereby evacuated of any political consciousness, a move that again, reads as affirming the nonviolent over the potential of violence in Kenya after the PEV.

Violent resistance in *Dance of the Jakaranda* emerges in response to the land dispossession and labor extraction resulting from the railway project, and in allusions to the Mau Mau Uprising, which, though never named, implicitly colors resistant violence across both time periods of the novel. The call to organized violent resistance in response to the construction of the railroad is represented in a manner reminiscent of canonical literary depictions of the Mau Mau, in its claim to a long tradition of African resistance, its expansion of the oath beyond men in the villages, and its religious attributes:

> [j]ust like our ancestors overcame the Wareno, just as they overcame the Waarabu. We shall overcome the Waingereza. And so, on these hallowed

> grounds, we shall take the oath to defend our land to the last man, to the last woman, to the last child, to our last breath" (148).

In response, McDonald embodies the excesses of state violence of the emergency period, first sending policemen to arrest the all the men in the village, a tactic that fails since they, like the Mau Mau fighters, had escaped to the forests. After this failure,

> his patience snapped and he exploded in violence, ordering the use of dynamite to destroy the kaya […] From his soldierly experience, McDonald knew the destruction of a place of worship was considered an act of terror – which was prohibited in conventional warfare – but nothing about the locals was conventional (179).

The narration of the oath-taking to protect one's land and freedom, and the excessive state violence which responds to it, clearly framed here as terrorism, alludes to the Mau Mau Uprising and British tactics of counter-insurgency. It is clear from the quotes above which side can claim the moral right, yet, the effect of McDonald's act of terror suggests the futility of such resistance regardless of its moral validity. After the kaya is blown up, the survivors "said they had never imagined humans could possess such power […] What was most evident was the deafening silence from the community, its fighting spirit momentarily crushed" (157). Though the inclusion of "momentarily" suggests a possible resurgence in resistant violence, by framing the original struggle against British colonialism in the late 1800s as a replica of the Mau Mau period, the implicit suggestion is that Mau Mau resistance too, merely stalled the inevitable progress of colonial (and implied post-independence) development. The combination of fire-power, military weaponry, and ethically flexible unconventional warfare strategies on the side of the colonialists (and post-independence governments) makes their victory inevitable.

This evacuation of the transformative potential of violence is affirmed in the representation of the most effective moments of violent resistance in the novel not as heroic, but as accidental and spontaneous, and dependent on Kimani's 'African Collective', which includes for him, those Indians who joined the fight for independence that he "seeks to acknowledge" (Magaziner). What emerges from these representations is an emphasis on the discrepancies and contradictions inherent in history, and an attempt by Kimani to create an alternative, multiethnic, Kenya, attentive to long histories of colonialism and diaspora as opposed to tribal and ethnic divisions. The discrepancies in the history of violent resistance and the inclusion of the Indian community in the struggle against the British are presented in the confrontation that occurs between McDonald and Babu at Fort Jesus in Mombasa. As McDonald tries to instill fear in the crowd of workers by arresting three runaways, Babu moves forward towards McDonald and his captives to offer his services as a translator, but when he does so, "a group of technicians followed in his step. They were waiting for someone to step forward and fire the first shot before they could join in" and soon "most of the marching workers held crude weapons in their hands, retrieved from the assortment of tools in their possession" (114). Though Babu is later cast as the hero of this confrontation, the narrator's representation of the events highlights the accidental nature of his leadership role.

Nyundo frames the events of the day differently, depicting the incident as a turning point in the African perspective on the British colonizers, "[n]ow I know they're nothing! Their medicine is muhindi. The Indian, I tell you […] He's the cure for the white man's oppression" (116). As the tales gain more extravagant details, Nyundo claims, contrary to the description of the narrator, who describes McDonald as shooting his gun ineffectively into the air to try to scare the crowd, that McDonald fired multiple bullets into Babu, but "[i]t's as though the bullets couldn't penetrate his skin" (117).

Several aspects of Nyundo's story are significant in an analysis of Kimani's representation of violent resistance and its mythologies. The first, is that Nyundo frames his story in a manner resonant with Fanon's understanding of how retelling certain episodes of history can sustain the "revolutionary capabilities" of the people (2004, 30), where his tale is meant to counter the fear inspired in the people by the white man. The second, however, which can be read as problematizing the first, is that "the cure for white man's oppression" is not African, but a "muhindi." This, however, plays into Kimani's stated aim to acknowledge to the Indian community and their role as part of the anticolonial resistance. Finally, by placing the narrator's official and ostensibly 'true' version of what happened before Nyundo's heroic, sensationalized version, the hierarchy which arises from these divergent descriptions is critical of heroic representations of historical resistance against the British, suggesting that behind the tales of heroism are arbitrary events, accidental and spontaneous in nature. Such an engagement with variations of 'truth' when it comes to moments of violent conflict, like other writing published after the PEV, resists idealized conceptions of the Mau Mau, but additionally expands understandings of what national unity might look like beyond the frameworks of tribe and ethnicity that have been central in debates on contemporary Kenyan history.

Conclusion

As argued above, the PEV in Kenya has resulted in attempts to both excavate and revise Kenyan history, to establish the truth of that history and its relation to the PEV, and to grapple with both the legacies of colonialism and the failures of the post-independent state in the persistence of authoritarian modes of government. In responding to the imperative to respond and recuperate presented by the PEV, the primary focus

across these texts has been on depicting complex truths as a way toward healing. This project, which demythologizes the violence of Kenya's past, depends on representations of the violence of the dispossessed during the Mau Mau Uprising as undifferentiated from other forms of violence, or as variously futile, accidental, or external. Further, in connecting the violence of the emergency period with the PEV, these writers present the continuities between the colonial and postcolonial eras, and resist the popular impulse to view the PEV as an aberration. Between revolutionary violence which cannot win and nonviolence which does not work, these authors' open a new path forward that insists on a recovery of the material histories of and continuities between the revolutionary violence of the past and instances of communal violence today, and establishes new registers of resistance in the globalized postcolonial imaginary centered on the excavation of inconvenient and alternative truths.

The following chapter engages a similar project, also engaging with stories and histories that have been overlooked, ignored, or forgotten. Focusing on the Asian community in Kenya, and particularly instances of solidarity across African and Asian communities, the following chapter engages further with Kimani's text beyond its specific representation of the Mau Mau Uprising in order to excavate how the novel, in addition to exposing material histories and continuities of violence in Kenya, additionally emphasizes solidarity as a response to the PEV.

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Chapter 2: Derailing the Rail: Indian-Kenyan Solidarity in Contemporary Anglophone fiction

The Railway Project in Kenya, launched by the British in 1895, had as its immediate aims "to extend a line deep into the unmapped heartland of eastern Africa, to make it pay for itself through exports and by attracting settlers, and to safeguard an important source of the Nile" (Miller and Yaeger, 12). Yet its impact extended far beyond the original economic and trade goals as the struggle for labor structured relations between the White settler, Asian, and African communities that would have long-ranging consequences.

When the British ran up against resistance in obtaining sufficient African wage laborers in Kenya to build the railway, they recruited some 40,000 Indian indentured laborers to fill the gap, making the railway project a primary site around which ethnic and racial divisions were constructed and naturalized. Not only were Indian railway workers encouraged to take intermediate artisan roles that came with economic advantages over African laborers, but the British also established Indians as a racial group positioned between the English and the Africans, through the support of a petty-bourgeoisie class of Indian traders. The resultant differences in material wealth and opportunities led to tensions between the two groups that would have profound effects on their relations into the independence era.

This chapter analyzes contemporary representations of the construction of the railway that are attentive to the Asian community in Kenya to examine the ways authors are returning to this foundational colonial project to think through its impacts and afterlives in the postcolonial era. Similarly to the argument put forward in Chapter 1, I suggest that the novels under consideration importantly expose and rewrite overlooked

histories, in this case around both sanitized versions of the colonial construction of the railway, and around the positionality of the Asian community in Kenya. In their narrative capacity to link the past and present, and explore alternative histories, they provide an important supplement to historiography on the railway and contemporary debates on ethnic tension and political violence in Kenya.

Sana Aiyar has argued, for example that, "[a]n overwhelming emphasis on singular territoriality and racially bounded scholarship on Kenya has resulted in the historiographical marginality of Indians, who are assumed to be historically insignificant" (1). Such historiographical approaches, she claims, imply the relationship between Indians and Africans was "apolitical and unchanging" rather than considering "the simultaneous coexistence of solidarity and friction in constituting this relationship"(13). While such elisions are rife within historiography, Aiyar notes fiction's capacity to represent the interwoven, complex, and intimate connections between the two communities, and she highlights Vassanji's novel, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* as a key example (203-4).

However, while there are indeed notable exceptions in literary texts that intervene in dominant discourse that overlooks Indians in Kenya, the rule has been a lack of representation. As Gaurav Desai argues in *Commerce with the Universe*, with a few exceptions, "India and Indians have not received much representation space in the canon of colonial and postcolonial black African literature. When (s)he appears, the Indian is inevitably cast as what E.M. Forster would call a "flat character"" (3). This chapter takes up a study of Vassanji's novel alongside Peter Kimani's more recent *The Dance of the Jakaranda* (2017) to explore representations of the Indian community in Kenya, particularly in a comparison between the types of representations that emerge before versus shifts after the PEV. By focusing on the railway, a product of collective efforts of

African and Indian laborers and a critical period in the settlement of Indians within the Kenyan national space, I explore how the PEV encourages the excavation of solidarity across ethnic lines through a return to and revision of the history of the railway's construction in Peter Kimani's narrative.

I begin the chapter with an overview of recent historical analyses of the construction of the railway, drawing out the ways historians have moved away from theories of modernization to attend to the material specificities of colonial projects like the railway. I connect these histories with current studies of the colonial roots of ethnic tension in contemporary Kenya, highlighting analyses of colonial regimes of citizenship based on race and ethnicity that critics connect with the geographies of violence in independent Kenya, including the 2007/8 post-election violence (PEV), which led to 1,133 deaths, thousands of cases of rape, and the displacement of at least 500,000 people (Branch).

The second section of the chapter analyzes a shift in fictional representations of the Indian community in Kenya, focusing on the construction of the railway by comparing M.G. Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003) to Peter Kimani's *Dance of the Jakaranda* (2017). I argue that while Vassanji's novel in some way can be read as reinscribing racial difference in its depiction of relationships between Indians and Africans in Kenya due to its focus on the transitional moment of independence and the practice of expulsion of the Asian community from Eastern Africa, Kimani's novel emphasizes solidarity, making an important and timely intervention into imagining the African collective in the aftermath of the 2007/8 PEV. *Dance of the Jakaranda*, not only shifts attention to inter-ethnic solidarities, but also importantly centers its narrative on the Indian laborer community as opposed to the class of Indian traders. It thus responds to the call not only of Aiyar in its illumination of the Asian

community in Kenya, but to that of Clive Gabay, who suggests that the elision of transcultural and transnational solidarities in the Kenyan anticolonial struggle stems from both elitist and colonial epistemologies. Kimani's novel, I argue, provides an alternative account of the period leading up to Independence, filling a gap in representations in its focus on non-elite cross-ethnic solidarities and creating a new, more expansive vision of both the national project and what he calls the African collective.

The Construction of the Railway: Naturalizing Ethnic and Racial Divisions in Colonial Kenya

The Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission, established in the wake of the 2007/8 PEV finds that,

> The violence, bloodshed and destruction of the PEV shocked Kenyans into the realization that their nation, long considered an island of peace and tranquility, remained deeply divided since independence from British colonial rule in December 1963 (vol. I, vi).

The TJRC analyzes the PEV as stemming from ethnic tensions generated during the colonial era which persist after independence, and the Commission takes up the call, echoed by a wide range of postcolonial thinkers, to critically examine this history and its afterlives in the postcolonial state. For the purposes of this chapter, I focus here on the specificity of the construction of the railway as a key site around which structures of ethnic and racial difference are created and naturalized.

Historians have long been attentive to the necessity of viewing strategies of colonial rule as processes rather than systems, and to the social and political effects of imperial projects that extend beyond the straightforward aims of capitalist development

and modernization. Bruce Berman, for example, defines the nature of the colonial state in Kenya as semi-autonomous, arguing that it was neither the pure instrument of capital nor a wholly autonomous agent. This intervention into understandings of colonial power responds to his perception that "[i]nstead of being analysed as an historical *process*, African development is characterized as a self-reproducing *system* imposed to serve the needs of metropolitan capital" (6). Rather than accepting theories of modernization and development that view colonial power as predetermined by Capital, Berman is attentive instead to "the complexity, ambiguity, and idiosyncrasy of the history of a single colony" (11). In a similar vein, Eunice Sahle analyzes the British imperial project in Kenya through a Fanonian lens, arguing that "contrary to the modernization view of imperial projects in Africa as civilizing and generating the necessary conditions for the continent to make the transition to capitalist modernity, the colonial state's efforts to produce and organize local geographies instead generated injustices." She argues that in Kenya, the spatial strategies of colonial rule produced a regime of citizenship based on ethnicity and race while simultaneously organizing economic space through accumulation by dispossession, both of which influence and produce what she calls "geographies of violence" in contemporary Kenya.

As the foundational colonial project in Kenya, the railway emerges in historical writing on Kenya as the site through which the structure of the future colonial (and independent state) were developed and negotiated. Samuel Ruchman views the railway as "the colonial state's progenitor", arguing that,

> Although extensive manipulation and dehumanization of populations is often associated with the settler state, it was under the preceding quasi-state of railway construction, with its own purported imperatives and labor demands, that British officials struggled with Africans and Indians, shaping and normalizing modes of

exploitation that would remain at the foundation of lived experiences under colonial rule.

Miller and Yeager similarly assert that "the Uganda Railway played a key role in creating the demographic, political, and socioeconomic configurations of modern Kenya," and that despite its original aims, "[t]he ultimate consequences of the Uganda Railway were much more profound and far-reaching (12).

The colonial structures that emerge during the construction of the railway that have such significant impact on the formation of the future colonial state and beyond, came about largely in response to the difficulty in recruiting and retaining African labor. This difficulty arose from the clash between the British wage labor model and cultural practices of African communities away from the coast. Unlike other places in Africa, which had greater and longer contact with European culture and commercialism, "in the central highlands of East Africa, the indigenous communities were largely untouched by Europeanizing influences, and thus, the British and African civilizations faced each other, often in stark contrast, as the British brought this region under control between 1890 and 1900" (Tignor, 3). British responses to the labor shortage during the construction of the railway have two significant consequences. The first was the decision to import Asian indentured labor for the construction of the railway, which had profound effects on race relations within the colony, and the second was "the manipulation of African labor pools – through taxes, punitive violence, diminished land reserves, and a multitude of other mechanisms – that would structure the experiences of colonial subjects in the decades to come" (Ruchman).

Each of these responses variously altered regimes of citizenship based on race and ethnicity that would have long ranging effects in Kenya. The division of labor on the railway project placed Indian indentured workers above their African counterparts,

establishing a racial hierarchy between the races. In addition to their reliance on Indian labor for the construction of the railway, Sana Aiyar notes that the British "encouraged the settlement of Indians in the new protectorate, using Indian business expertise to create a monetary colonial economy […] considering Indians subimperialist agents of civilization in the region" (8). Envisioning the Indian traders as central to the "modernizing mission of the British in Kenya," colonial officials considered them "indispensable to the colonial economy as agents of civilizational progress who would stimulate demand for consumer goods among Africans" (31). Inevitably this caused tensions between the African and Asian communities as Indian traders became, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o notes, "a most visible part of the affluent middle class. In such a case the line between racial and class resentment is thin."

The situating of the Asian community in a manner meant to manipulate and articulate African populations into the capitalist economic system as well as to divide along racial lines is linked by Berman to the simultaneous practice of colonial officials of establishing chiefs for the recruitment of labor, which created hierarchies that privileged collaborators and created tensions within and between various Kenyan communities.

In addition to the establishment of chiefs to coerce local labor, the British also imposed various policies including the pass system and hut taxes designed increase wage labor populations. As Samuel Ruchman argues,

> In the end, railway construction regularized, and in the minds of many British policy-makers vindicated, the explicit dehumanization of non-Europeans in the East Africa Protectorate […] Physically the colonial state sought to control African and Indian bodies and the spaces they occupied to maximize economic exploitation and attain political objectives […] In effect, the colonial state controlled peoples' physical movement, production, and reproduction, as well as

valuable agricultural land and commercial urban property, all within a racial hierarchy.

It is precisely such racial hierarchies, which emerge from colonial strategies of control that, according to Eunice Sahle, "have influenced the emergence of geographies of violence in Kenya in the era of democracy." She persuasively argues even after independence, because the state was de-racialized but did not fundamentally change in structure and strategies, that "this naturalization of a differentiated regime of citizenship that emerged out of colonial political, historical, and spatial strategies was a core factor in the emergence of foreigner/outsider/other, up country, non-indigenous discourses that characterized Kenya in the period leading to the 2007-2008 political violence."

As I will argue in the following analyses of recent fiction on the construction of the railway, and especially of the representations of the Asian community in Kenya, there is a marked shift after the 2007/8 PEV. While before the PEV racial differences remain, and are reinscribed in fiction in part in response to the treatment of the Asian community at the moment of independence, the PEV has profound effects in the ways authors try to reimagine and rewrite history in ways that aim to expose the constructedness of ethnic and racial tensions and to excavate alternative histories of solidarity.

"In-Between": The Railway as Metaphor for the Asian Community in Kenya

While contemporary Kenyan writing has focused extensively on colonial histories and African anticolonial resistance, particularly in relation to the 1952-1960 Mau Mau Uprising, the novels of M.G. Vassanji and Peter Kimani stand out in their focus on the Asian community in Kenya, which, as Ngũgĩ has noted, has remained largely marginal and invisible in historical and literary texts (2012).

M.G. Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2004) centers on the eponymous character, who has fled the country after topping a corruption list in post-independence Kenya. While much of the novel centers on Vikram's adult life after independence, large sections of the novel, told in flashback, explore the history of Vikram's family, including his grandfather's recruitment and labor on the railway. Peter Simatei's work on Vassanji's novel focuses on the representation of the railway as both an originary source of colonial capitalist exploitation and land dispossession, and as the tie that binds Indian indentured laborers and their descendants to the land. He suggests that,

> In the postcolonial Kenya, the railway would achieve a variety of symbols and significance: it would stand as a symbol of colonial conquest and exploitation, of Kenya's entry into modernity, of Indian affiliation to the land, of their role in ushering in Kenya into this modernity. In a sense, this fluid symbolic status of the railway mirrors the ambivalent relationship of East African Asian experiences to Kenya's nationalist histories (2011).

Indeed, Vikram describes the railroad in precisely this joint fashion – connecting it to the imperial designs of the British and as the source of Indian connection to and even ownership over the land: "[t]he railway running from Mombasa to Kampala, proud "Permanent Way" of the British and "Gateway to the African Jewel," was our claim to the land. Mile upon mile, rail next to thirty-foot rail, fishplate to follow fishplate, it had been laid by my grandfather and his fellow Punjabi labourers" (Vassanj, 16).

This passage foregrounds the intentions of the railway in the words of the British, as its "Permanent Way" and "Gateway to the African Jewel." Later in the passage such imperialist views of Africa are reiterated in the narrator's reflection on his grandfather's group of Indian laborers, who were "recruited from an assortment of towns in northwest

India and brought to this alien, beautiful, and wild country at the dawn of the twentieth century" (16). Here Africa is exoticized and its development framed in the discourse of modernization, as the railway is built at the "dawn" of the new century by Indian laborers who build the line "strenuously and persistently six hundred miles from the Swahili coast […] before bringing it to descend gently and finally to the great lake Victoria-Nyanza that was the heart of what became beloved Africa" (17).

By highlighting the connection between British aims and an Indian sense of pride in ushering in this modernizing force that connects them to Kenya, Vassanji's text mirrors Aiyar's articulation of the subimperial claims of Indians to African land and their pride in participating in the modernizing project of the railway, making this new country "belong" to them and vice versa, not dissimilarly to the way colonial settlers might have viewed their contributions to Kenya. In her history of the importation of labor from India to build the railway, Aiyar highlights the expectation of colonial officials that Indian laborers, merchants, and agriculturalists would be "central to the modernizing mission of the British in Kenya" (31), a belief that helped to create a three-tiered racial hierarchy which advantaged Indians over Africans under colonial rule. Aiyar suggests that during this time, leading Indian merchants and politicians positioned themselves as "subimperialist colonizers, asserting their rights as imperial citizens to gain parity with European settlers in political representation and land ownership" (12). Connecting their negotiation of identity in Kenya to Gandhi's claims of imperial citizenship, Aiyar also notes the ways in which Indians in Kenya mobilized concepts of Indian modernity and civilization as opposed to African savagery. In this way, she explains, "the diasporic construction of "Indianness" not only evoked a spatial and civilizational difference between Indians and Africans but also conflated race with civilization" (68).

These conceptions of Indian imperial citizenship, both in subimperialist roles and in the distinction drawn between Indian modernity and civilization as opposed to "African savagery" emerge throughout Vassanji's novel. Along with the family's history of work on the railway cited above, the symbolic value of the railway for the Indian community extends beyond its original construction when Vikram himself is made an auditor and inspector of the line after independence. In his new role, he fulfills his childhood dream of "speeding on a railway engine from lake to coast, crossing the country back and forth, head and shoulders leaning out proudly to appraise the world flying past before me" (Vassanji, 239). Along with his role as appraiser, Vikram's representation of what the rail provides him is also telling: "[t]he country was mine to explore, on this mysterious metal highway stretching from the coast into the interior, its iron rails reaching to diverse, far-flung and strange places; stories clung to it and ghosts still haunted its path. It could well have been called the Thousand and More Miles of Fantastic Lives and Ghost Stories" (240). Not only does his position on the railway echo narratives of ownership, but the railway itself, and the movement between stations becomes a metaphor for Vikram's experience of his position as an Indian in Kenya: "[i]n that intermediate state, between place and place, one life and another life, perhaps there was also a kinship with my own inner nature" (243).

Along with the metaphorical significance of the railway, the text's narration emphasizes the distinction drawn between the Indian and African communities at the moment of the railway's construction and then later in the vexed moment of independence. In the section detailing the grandfather's work on the railway, this distinction is drawn through the juxtaposition of the hard work of Indian railway laborers in ushering Kenya into modernity and instances of "African savagery" through violence

against the Asian community. In the section focused on the original construction of the railway, the narrator reflects:

> [o]ur people had sweated on it, had died on it: they had been carried away in their weary sleep or even wide awake by man-eating lions of magical ferocity and cunning, crushed under avalanches of blasted rock, speared and macheted as proxies of the whites by angry Kamba, Kikuyu, and Nandi warriors (16-17).

The division between the communities is clearly established in the use "our" to define the Asian laborers in contrast with the "angry" African warriors. Additionally, the focus on primitive weapons such as spears and machetes reiterates colonialist narratives of African atavism and produces the Asian laborers as clearly separated from such uncivilized violence. The implicit inability of Africans to distinguish between colonial oppressors and Indian laborers, who become "proxies of the whites" in the quotation above, takes on new but related relevance later in the novel in Vikram's articulation of his own frustrated feelings of betrayal at the moment of independence,

> Here I was, a young Asian graduate in an African country, with neither the prestige of whiteness or Europeanness behind me, nor the influence and members of a local tribe to back me, but carrying instead the stigma from a generalized recent memory of an exclusive race of brown "Shylocks" who had collaborated with the colonizers. What could I hope to achieve in public service? Black chauvinism and reverse racism were the order of the day against Asians (238-9).

For Vikram, the problem is the binary, and his positionality "in-between" white and black in terms of belonging but also in terms of power where race and class intersect. After independence and as corrupt African officials take over from their colonial predecessors, Lall is cast as once again taking up the mantle of the middle man – a privileged position between the elite and corrupt politicians making money off of foreign

investment rather than directing funding the people, who continue to struggle under this new form of expropriative capitalism. As Simatei notes,

> as the novel delves deeply into the story of the postcolonial nation, the line between Asian betrayal and African nationalism gets blurred as the new class of African ruling elite begins to engage in corrupt deals. In the new dispensation, Indians (Vikram) find new roles as, again, middle men, but this time of the corrupt African elite and foreign businessmen. As Vikram enjoys privileges of closeness to the seat of power, we know for sure that like the colonial privilege his parents enjoyed, this one too is founded on a shaky alliance. Used and then dumped by the political elite, he flees to Canada as if to re-enact the earlier exodus by his father's generation.

Simatei's reading of the novel is recuperative in its analysis of such representations of the Asian community, and he concludes his analysis by suggesting that, "the novel often annexes the nationalist discourse and subjects it to its polyphonic structure, and when this occurs, the novel's latent hybridity decenters homogenous nationalist visions." In Simatei's view, the novel represents "heterogenous social formations within the nation-space and amplifies such formations as structures within which emancipatory politics can be organized." While I follow Simatei's argument that posits the significance of decentering "homogenous nationalist visions", I do not espouse his final conclusion about the emancipatory potential of Vassanji's text, when read after the 2007 PEV.

While Vassanji's novel importantly focuses on the intimacy between Indian and Kenyan communities highlighted by Aiyar, and Kenya's "heterogenous social formations" as noted by Simatei, it can also be read as reinscribing racial difference in its consistent representation of the "in-betweenness" and ambiguity of the Asian community in Kenya, particularly when read side by side with Peter Kimani's novel *The Dance of the*

Jakaranda (2017). This can be explained in part due to the separation in their publication dates, where Vassanji is engaging with an exploration of the Indian community in Kenya during the transitional period of independence in a context of the expulsion of and biases against the South Asian community during this time, in Kenya and also famously in Amin's Uganda.[13]

Indeed, Gaurav Desai has argued for the centrality of M.G. Vassanji's writing in the East African Asian literary tradition, claiming that *The Gunny Sack* "occupies a similar inaugural role […] that Simon Gikandi has argued for Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in the tradition of African fiction as a whole" (15). The significance of Vassanji's writing, Desai suggests, "is not only the weight and substance that he gives to a cross-generational ethnic history, it is also his insistence that ethnic identities matter, that they must be recognized and engaged with before they can be set aside for the sake of larger, cross-ethnic national imaginaries" (173). This argument can be directly aligned with the work of *The In-Between Life of Vikram Lall,* which, focusing as it does on the transitional moment of independence, seeks to recognize and engage with the challenges faced by Asian citizens of Kenya at that time when policies began to turn against them, and in light of the contemporaneous expulsion of Asians by Amin in Uganda.

In short, the emphasis on ethnic and racial difference that emerges in Vassanji has many positive readings, overall his writing makes important interventions in, possibly even creating a particular literary canon within East African fiction. However, while during the early 2000s, when Vassanji wrote this novel a focus on differences may have

[13] Sana Aiyar highlights the fear of the impact of independence on the part of the Asian community in Kenya and cites as a consequence "The exodus of approximately 33,000 Indians who emigrated from Kenya to Britain between September 1967 and February 1968 after the passing of two legislative bills aimed at circumscribing Indian economic activity" (263), though she notes "Kenyatta's policies were less extreme than either those witnessed in Zanzibar during this time" and also "quite different from the expulsion of Indians from Uganda under Idi Amin just two years later" (271).

had productive ends, there is a marked shift in Kimani's novel relating to representations of the relationship between the Asian and African communities, which covers a similar period quite differently after the PEV.

I suggest that while Vassanji deploys the railroad as a metaphor for the in-betweenness of the Asian community in Kenya in a way that made an important intervention to the particularity of the postcolonial moment after independence, Kimani makes the railway a metaphor for the possibilities of collective resistance to colonial and postcolonial capitalist exploitation in response to the specificity of the PEV and the necessity of recuperating a multiethnic Kenyan identity in its aftermath. In its emphasis on solidarity across racial and ethnic boundaries, Kimani's novel is a timely intervention into reimagining the African collective in the aftermath of the 2007/8 PEV.

"The product of collective efforts": The Railway as Metaphor of Interracial Solidarity in Resistance

Kimani has explicitly stated the impact of the 2007/8 PEV on the writing of the novel, which he began in 2007 but had to put aside as he grappled with the aftermath of the PEV (Grubel). His representation of the history of the railway's construction then, must be read through the lens of the PEV and the imperative emerging in its wake to examine the constructedness of ethnic and racial difference, particularly at such a foundational moment of colonial history.

Kimani states that the railway is "a metaphor of the segregated society that the colonialists build in Kenya. In a certain sense, the railroad presages racial segregation as official policy in the colony" (Magaziner). His novel is attentive to the long arc of Kenyan history since colonialism, with sections of the narrative shuttling between the

building of the railroad by the British in 1895-1901, and the period leading to independence in 1963. It explores the dynamics of race, identity, and imperial exploitation through the connections between its characters, including Edward McDonald, the British railway superintendent who oversees the work of the railroad and stays on in the Rift Valley after independence, Babu Salim, one of the 30,000 indentured Indian workers engaged in the construction of the Railway, and Nyundo, an African drummer who mobilizes the workers and later joins the resistance against the British. Kimani has stated that the novel is centered on race relations and the impacts of imperialism on the "African collective" which "the novel seeks to confirm" (Carrol 2017), and his book is a prescient exploration of issues of identity and belonging, marking a new interest in examining the non-African communities of Kenya. Kimani states that some Indians were "complicit in the establishment of the Kenya colony, and enjoyed more privileges in colonial Kenya. Yet others fought to end British colonization of Kenya. It is the latter group that my book seeks to acknowledge" (Magaziner). In its focus on solidarities across race, I argue the novel defamiliarizes notions of ethnic tension in Africa, highlighting the colonial roots of these divisions, and representing alternative versions of collective resistance.

The book insists on the exposing the connection between colonial capitalist exploitation and divide-and-rule practices for labor extraction in the construction of the railway. The actions of McDonald routinely emphasize the creation of regimes of citizenship based on ethnicity and race that Eunice Sahle claims are the outcome of colonial spatial strategies. Originally these strategies are focused on labor extraction, laid out in a letter from McDonald's predecessor, who variously suggests taxation, the appointment of chiefs, the killing of livestock, and who reminds both McDonald and the reader that, "when all else fails, violence is still a viable option. There is no better

medicine to native obstinacy than a good beating" (128). After an early moment of resistance from the railway laborers, McDonald is described as having "picked up many useful lessons […] the most crucial being that brute force was the only language that the locals and newly arrived Indians understood. And to ensure the locals and Indians did not join hands, McDonald formulated what he called a "divide and rule policy"" (128). The novel comes back to this again and again, highlighting the conscious and consistent manner in which McDonald's character is "actively balkanizing [African and Indian laborers] along racial lines" (186).

Yet while the intention of the British colonialists through the figure of McDonald is clear, Kimani offers alternatives throughout the text, pushing back on teleological understandings of history. Even as the text lingers on McDonald's divide and rule practices, it simultaneously gestures toward the fundamental connection between laborers from different ethnic and racial communities, opening up the possibility of alternative versions of relationality between the workers: "[t]he different racial groups, Master had written in one of his dispatches to London, remained separate like the rail tracks. Yet the rail was a product of their collective efforts – of black and brown and white hands" (9). The book combines this attention to alternative connections with an emphasis on the radicalization of British violence in response to resistance, rather than representing the completion of the railway as the only possible outcome.

At a key moment of unified resistance in the text, nine villages join together to address the threat of the railway construction. The kaya elder addresses the crowd, announcing "We have gathered here because we know there is strength in unity, and two heads are better than one. A hundred heads are better than ten. We are here because our collective future is under threat" (146). The emphasis on the collective is further developed in this moment of resistance when Nyundo, a worker on the railway, inspired

by the strength of the kaya elders in mobilizing the community decides to switch sides, and declares "He would work for the *kaya* elders and the community," as well as the implied reasons for his choice, as the text reads, "some whispered he had been emboldened by the Indian workers' act of defiance against McDonald at Fort Jesus, and now the *kaya* showdown in which the elders had carried the day." (155). This scene then, establishes the possibility of an African collective that transcends ethnic and racial divisions, in its inclusion of a wide variety of villages, African railway workers, and instances of Indian resistance to the British imperial project.

By highlighting both the potential of unified resistance against colonial projects, and simultaneously drawing attention to the radicalization of colonial violence to control the laboring populations, the novel unsettles teleological assumptions about the railway's ultimate success. Immediately after the above moment of solidarity and resistance, McDonald makes the decision to ring the kaya with dynamite and blow up a large part of the community, emphasizing the willingness of the British complete the railway project and by any means. McDonald's act of violence against the community stems from his belief that "[w]hat the natives needed is what his trainers at Sandhurst called a short, sharp shock." (156). This action is represented in the text as clearly a terrorist act: "[f]rom his soldierly experience, McDonald knew the destruction of a place of worship was considered an act of terror – which was prohibited in conventional warfare – but nothing about the locals was conventional (179). Though state terror succeeds in this instance, it is important that Kimani also narrates the preceding moment of collective resistance, highlighting the extremity of violence that was required from the British in order to overwhelm the resolve of the community. Even the success of the action is left open to revision as the scene ends with the note, "[w]hat was most evidence was the deafening silence from the community, its fighting spirit momentarily crushed" (157),

which emphasizes the discrete nature of the success and the possibility of further resistance and fighting spirit.

The book consistently excavates elided histories and ignored moments of resistance. Immediately following a letter from a colonial administrator that outlines the success of "divide-and-rule and other forms of unconventional warfare" (174) is the note by the narrator that, "[w]hat Captain John Adams omitted in his report was the fact that Chief Lonana's band of warriors, spurred on by the strong medicine of Kioni – the seer who had warned about invading white butterflies long before the onset of the British – halted the railway reconnaissance for one whole year as they defended their land" (176). The inclusion of these revisions to colonial narratives in the text resists and unravels the success of the railway project, emphasizing alternative moments of effective communal resistance. In a similar metafictional moment, almost an aside, the narrator counsels the reader,

> the invitation here is to neither trust the tale nor the teller. That's a difficult proposition, especially when the Nyundos of this world are not there to counterbalance what's witnessed and recorded as the history of mankind. And since the English bear the special gift of transforming even the most humiliating spectacle into a historical epoch, it is a safe bet that the truth resides somewhere else other than where it is presumed to be. The writing on the wall of the British Museum, dripping with bronze arrogance in that hallowed space where the supreme truth is supposed to reside, proclaims: IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR A COUNTRY TO CREATE A RAILWAY, BUT THIS LINE ACTUALLY CREATED A COUNTRY. This was probably true; what the statement concealed, however, were the obstacles that nearly derailed the rail, and those men who nearly brought the construction to a halt. Those are the stories that never made it

> into the museums, like the story of Nyundo, who initially harkened the call of the British, but changed sides after the destruction of the *kaya*. Then there is Babu (201).

The overall message here is the necessity of counterbalancing what is recorded as history, in this case, colonial narratives invested in erasing and concealing "the obstacles that nearly derailed the rail". Additionally, and importantly, this resistance again is directly connected to Babu, the avatar of the Indian community working in solidarity with African anticolonial agents.

Babu emerges in the text as a character who struggles with his identity but ultimately puts aside questions of racial difference in order to make the ethical choice to join the resistance. His moment of choice occurs when he leaves the railway and travels by foot across the country, seeing for the first time the big picture of the colonial project, and connecting what is happening in Kenya to what happened under colonialism in India:

> Babu had a sudden revelation. He had seen similar enterprises in Punjab – what was pending here was the means to ship away what the land could produce. That's where he and the others came in – they were to lay the rail to transport the crops to the coast. This was the turning point in Babu's life […] It was in that walk through the bush that Babu made a silent vow to do something. What, exactly, he did not know. He just knew he had to do something about the white domination taking root before his very eyes (233).

What Babu does is join the anticolonial resistance movement, which becomes an alternative railroad in the text. Nyundo explains, "Our *organized resistance* went underground. Unlike yours, our railroad was not built using iron; it was laid in the hearts of people who were guided by a desire to do what's right." Babu's choice is thus explicitly framed as moral, and Nyundo's use of "our" in this passage directly connects

the Indian community with African anticolonial resistance, when he names Babu as a key figure in the resistance movement, "His code name in the forest was Guka. Patriot of the highest order. And when the history of this country is written, a chapter will be devoted to him. "(286).

Through his excavation not only of the existence but the efficacy of solidarity in resistance across race, Kimani rewrites not only colonial history, but later histories of anticolonial resistance that emerge and are rewritten after independence. Towards the end of the novel, Kimani emphasizes the invisibility of Babu in the history of newly independent Kenya. Gathenji, a local in Nakuru, where McDonald and Babu have both settled after the completion of the railway, says to Babu, "You know, now that we are about to celebrate our independence, you stand tall as one of our fathers of the nation." "Not so loud," Babu cautioned. "Some don't think of fatherhood as a shared responsibility" (31). Importantly, these conceptions of fatherhood and the possibility of shared responsibility reference not only colonial history, but also the revised history of independent Kenya and the political revision of the history of the Mau Mau Uprising. At independence, Babu's role in the anticolonial movement will again be invisibilized as "Africa for Africans" becomes the refrain of the de-racialized, but otherwise similarly structured postcolonial state. As Vijay Prashad suggests in his analysis of the third world project, the aspirational unity that emerged in anticolonial struggles was swiftly undone by the political elite who recognized once in power that, "the unity that had been preserved at all costs became a liability" (xvii). By ending the novel at the moment of independence and as histories are merely differently elided compared to the colonial past, Kimani draws attention to how dominant discourses work to erase cross-racial and cross-ethnic unity through both eras of Kenya's history.

"Not being visible is not the same as not being there" (21), Babu tells fellow Indians workers, and Kimani is intent in the closing of the novel at reiterating the stories that are forgotten. In the final page of the novel, Nakuru is described as "the cradle of mankind, the point of dispersal for all humanity, irrespective of race, color, or creed" (342), and the narrator, as in the rest of the novel, reminds the reader of those people and events that have been forgotten in postcolonial history, "the man who Nakuru forgot is Babu […] Babu's memorable assertion upon watching the construction of the original Jakaranda in 1901 – that not being seen is not the same as not being there – remains a succinct truth" (341). Adding to this, the novel ends by gesturing to the histories that even its own pages have not managed to resuscitate:

> Interestingly, no one remembers the women behind the pioneers, or their children. Just as no one remembers that the train, gliding along twice every week, rocking slowly, gently smoothly, penetrating the beautiful countryside before squeaking its horn in joyful ejaculation, made a forcible entry into their land, raping and tearing it viciously, once upon a time" (342).

Tying the Indian community with gender and the elided material history of the railway, the novel ends with an imperative to remember.

Conclusion

The 2007/8 PEV shifted Kenyan authors' perceptions of their responsibility as writers in its aftermath. In the opening editorial to Kenyan literary journal *Kwani? 5* (2008), which centers on narratives related to the PEV, Billy Kahora writes, "it is our hope that, taken together, these testimonials articulate an essential quality all countries have to accept before they can work as a nation: unity" (Vol. 1, 22). In the editorial

opening the second volume, Kahora enjoins his fellow writers to reject the "amnesiac collusion" of Kenyan public life (Vol. 2, 9). Binyavanga Wainana similarly casts the role of the writer as resistant and necessarily centered on facing the contemporary reality of Kenya: "It is being suggested everywhere that the Post Election madness was a sort of anomaly, let us go back to where we were and it will be alright. As writers, we have said no to this: we have to look at what happened in the full-face" (Vol. 2, 17).

In my reading of Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall,* I have suggested that representations of the Asian community in Kenya remain centered on racial difference in a way that can be seen to reinscribe rather than decenter dominant nationalist narratives, even as the novel importantly brings Asian characters to the fore. It is in Kimani's *Dance of the Jakaranda* that I see the imperatives of Kahora and Wainana emerge as the novel shifts from racial difference to interracial solidarity, the oft-neglected element of the history of Indians in Kenya (Aiyar, 3), and faces the realities of the colonial past and its afterlives on geographies of violence in contemporary Kenya (Sahle) in the "full face". In his focus on interracial solidarity, Kimani not only takes up the call for revised histories of Kenya and consideration of the constructedness of racial divisions, but additionally, by centering the narrative on the Asian community in the colonial past, he defamiliarizes contemporary ethnic tension while making an appeal to solidarity and unity across Kenyan communities. Through his representations of collective resistance and its impacts, Kimani excavates solidarity as the true history of the Kenyan people – locating the drivers of racial and class tension squarely in the realm of elite colonial and postcolonial leadership and providing an important intervention into recent narratives that focus on ethnic tensions as opposed to the material histories of land dispossession or cross-community solidarity in resistance.

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Chapter 3: A Dialectics of Violence: Neel Mukherjee's Naxalite Narrative in the 'Age of Terror'[14]

Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others* (2014), is part of a contemporary set of acclaimed novels in English set during the Naxalite movement, including Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013). Together, these three novels are among the most well-known texts to, and most clearly targeted at, Western audiences[15], making them unique in the growing Anglophone canon of what Nina Martyris calls the 'naxal novel', a genre that, through the lens of the Naxalite movement, offers reflections on the violent conflict between state and non-state actors in India. Mukherjee's novel has escaped the kinds of political critiques that have been leveled at Roy and Lahiri which address a lack of appropriate contextualization and accuracy in their depictions of the Naxalite movement. However, I argue that despite the strengths of Mukherjee's novel in comparison to the other two, *The Lives of Others* reproduces a troubling pattern of representing state violence as both justified and demanded, particularly when read from the positionality of the West and in the context of the global war on terror.

This chapter begins by considering how *The Lives of Others* can be read, like the Kenyan texts of the first two chapters, as a corrective to the perceived blind spots in previous naxal novels, in its in-depth representation of the social, material, and political contexts of Naxalite violence. The chapter then analyzes the tension between the form

[14] A version of this chapter was published as "A Dialectics of Violence: Making Sense of Neel Mukherjee's Naxalite Narrative in the 'Age of Terror'" *South Asian Review*. 38.1 (2017): 115-126.
[15] Roy's 1997 text won the Man Booker prize, and both Lahiri and Mukherjee's novels were shortlisted, indicating the prestige of all three texts and an extensive Western readership. Further, since each of these novels has been published in the UK or the US as opposed or in addition to being published in English in India, and because Lahiri and Mukherjee both also reside in the West, it is apparent that they are deeply engaged with and aimed at Western audiences.

and content of the novel, which serves to critique but ultimately justify the violence of the state. First, I contend that while the novel critiques police violence through the depiction of extralegal tactics and the way it tactically mirrors non-state terror, this critique is undercut through a simultaneous representation of police violence as impersonal and omnipotent, which grants it implicit justification in comparison to the criminalized violence of the Naxalites. Secondly, I argue that though the structure of the text establishes a critique of the metalepsis inherent in war on terror discourse, this critique is subverted by the final epilogue, which ultimately demands state violence as a necessary response to the act of terror narrated on its last page. These reversals in the novel's representation of state violence and in its narrative structure play into contemporary war on terror discourse, which justifies and demands exceptional and excessive forms of state violence, by reproducing the state's monopoly on the justified (if not always legitimate) use of force.

I conclude by arguing that, for Western audiences, the temporality and content of the final epilogue connects historical Naxalite and contemporary Maoist violence in India with the global war on terror and attempts an intervention in normative responses to terrorism. While the epilogue productively defers and defamiliarizes the terrorist act for Western readers, excavating the elided causes of terrorism, the explosion with which it ends, connected as it is to the countless and spectacularized explosions against which the war on terror situates itself, ultimately subverts any nuanced understanding of the terrorist act and reproduces now normalized calls for excessive state violence to ensure security for civilian populations.

The Naxalite movement in Roy and Lahiri: incomplete representations

The Naxalite Movement, which began in 1967 as a conflict between peasants and landlords backed by the power of the state, as explained by Sumanta Banerjee was caused by "feudal exploitation, rural poverty, the Indian state's recourse to repression to silence the protests of the rural poor, and its bondage to the two superpowers to maintain the status quo" (ii). Despite political independence, village life in India had semi-feudal characteristics, and landless laborers in rural areas experienced consistently increasing poverty, hunger, and indebtedness due to the land tenure system, moneylending, and the ways in which landowners were able to bypass the land reform policies of the government, continuing to exploit peasants in the countryside. Yet, in dominant discourse, the Naxalite Movement is often diminished to a mere slur for anti-nationalism or violence. In the public sphere, particularly on the global level, the Naxalites have fallen within the scope of war on terror discourse, particularly after Singh's 2006 declaration.[16] Thus, literature arising in relation to the Naxalite movement has often had significant critique based on the political nature of these representations and the interventions they could make into dominant discourse on the subject.

Critiques of the politics of Roy and Lahiri's novels highlight the lack of appropriately contextualized and accurate representations of the Naxalite movement. In the case of *The God of Small Things*, such analysis centers on Roy's depiction of the Left, which shifts in the text's 1969 sections between the Naxalite movement, represented in the novel as a feeling or atmosphere, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M), with which the movement is ambiguously connected. Of these critiques, Aijaz Ahmad's is perhaps the most well-known and frequently cited. In "Reading Arundhati Roy *Politically,*" he asserts of Roy's representation of the Left that, "the limits of private

[16] Singh famously called the Maoist struggle "India's greatest internal security challenge" in a speech in 2006, cited in the Hindustan Times "Naxalism Biggest Threat: PM".

experience seem also to be the limits of her Realism" (112). While Ahmad's analysis of Roy's politics relates specifically to her depiction of the CPI(M) rather than the Naxalite movement, I read her narrative as diminishing the movement in a manner similar to the one Ahmad describes, particularly in its conflation of the spaces that the Naxalites and the CPI(M) occupy.

This conflation of the CPI(M) and the movement is most prevalent in the narration of the Party-organized march that surrounds the family's Plymouth and interrupts their journey to Cochin. Roy provides her most extensive narration of the political context of 1969 Kerala in reference to the Naxalites in this section, briefly describing their activities and declaring that, "they breathed a plume of excitement and fear into the already frightened air" (66). The march immediately follows this reflection on the Naxalites, thereby connecting the two in the narrative's spatial organization, and, as Ahmad argues, in the description of the march itself: "So indistinct is this mass that the reader is given to understand both that the demonstration has been organized by the ruling CPI(M) for the workers to demand only pitiful little reforms *and* that the 'passion' swirling around is 'Naxalite', something of an all-purpose term in Roy's fiction" (112). The Party and movement are thus conflated, and Naxalism, rather than being a specific and definable movement, is rearticulated as a feeling of anger and rage at the existing social, economic, and political systems, or, as Alex Tickell suggests, a "pure sign of radical dissent" (33). Despite Roy's knowledge about and political sympathy for the Naxalites, which emerges clearly in her later non-fiction essays, in *The God of Small Things,* the representation of the movement minimizes it to an abstract symbol or atmosphere.

Similar, if more pointed, critiques are leveled at Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland,* for its lack of historical and political contextualization, and its simplistic criminalization

of the Naxalites. Nivedita Majumdar explicitly connects her critique of Lahiri and Ahmad's critique of Roy in the title of her 2014 article, "Reading Jhumpa Lahiri Politically." She claims that, "Lahiri remains confined by a sensibility invested in cultural knowledge unencumbered by questions of power and ideology" making the novel "crumbl[e] under the burden of a subject that remains outside its authors ambit of sympathy."

I would go further to suggest that for Lahiri, the Naxalite movement is not merely beyond her sympathy, but that she is aggressively unsympathetic - even at the expense of the novel's coherence – as the narrative includes a glaring contradiction in its most significant description of Naxalite violence. The act which condemns Udayan to death and marks his wife for unhappiness, is the killing of a policeman they both are involved in. When Udayan and his comrades first discuss the attack, a policeman is considered as a target "for the authority he embodied, and for his gun" (411), yet the description on the next page reads, "The attack occurred in the early afternoon, when the policeman was on his way to pick up his son from school. A day he was off duty. A day, thanks to Guari, they knew he would not be armed" (412). This distinction not only has significant implications on the novel's plot trajectory, but more generally serves to criminalize Naxalite violence in a move that shows more concern with affective consequences for the novel's characters than with material accuracy. I agree with critics who suggest this is not the main concern of Lahiri, who has been read as using the Naxalite movement to explore diaspora (Majumdar) and neo-cosmopolitanism (Paudyal), rather than to attempt a compelling representation of the movement's context and history, but I would also emphasize the significance of the above contradiction as reflective of antipathy rather than mere lack of interest.

Read together, the critiques of Roy and Lahiri's texts reveal a pattern in novels set during the Naxalite period of referencing the contexts of the movement, but either erasing or incompletely representing its politics by reducing it to an abstract symbol, or by producing an alternative focus which the movement merely serves to frame. It is in light of these critiques that I read Mukherjee's novel as both skillfully rendering what has been elided in these earlier texts, and as producing a new set of political problems.

The Lives of Others provides a detailed narration of peasant life and labor, and the exploitation and repression which gives rise to the violence of the Naxalites. Mukherjee's Naxalite characters have names, families, and specific histories of oppression, and the material circumstances of life in the countryside among the working laborers and peasants is carefully researched and described. The sections of the novel devoted to Supratik, the novel's main Naxalite character, are the only ones written in the first person, providing the reader unique access to the thoughts and ideas which motivate his participation in the movement, and to the realities of peasant life through his observations and descriptions. The level of detail and intimacy with which the movement and the peasantry are represented in these sections is largely absent from Roy and Lahiri, demonstrating Mukherjee's investment in accurately representing the material, daily features of peasant life and exploitation which give rise to the movement.

Through his contextualized rendering of the Naxalites, Mukherjee improves and expands the scope of the naxal novel. However, I argue that this 'corrective' exposes a different problem. Though Naxalite violence is represented as highly personal, individualized, and specific, police and state violence is consistently represented as impersonal and omnipotent, marking the latter as implicitly justified. Further, the structure of the novel ultimately demands violence from the state through its inclusion of a contemporary terror attack against a civilian population, a move which reaffirms

paradigms of expanded state power in the 'state of exception' which, as Giorgio Agamben claims, characterizes the war on terror era.[17]

Contextualizing Naxalite violence

Sumanta Bannerjee's description of village life and the way in which peasants were exploited and impoverished is part of his argument articulating the reasons for resistant violence. It is within this larger context that Mukherjee opens his novel with a prologue that can be read not only as the prologue to the narrative, but to the movement itself, as a starving farmer, in desperation, kills his family and himself, echoing real life events and bringing to mind the persistence of such struggles as seen in the continued incidents of farmer suicides in India, which, as measured by the National Crime Records Bureau have risen to a rate of 15,000 each year since 1995 (Agarwal).

The prologue set in 1966 opens the novel by articulating the need for social change. The brief section is devastating in its description of Nitai Das's last day which clearly validates the revolutionary impulses of the Naxalite Movement. Nitai has been begging for food at the house of his landlord where he has been refused, and finally beaten. He is so weak, he can barely make the walk home. We meet him in the opening line of the novel, where,

> A third of the way through the half-mile walk from the landlord's house to his hut, Nitai Das's feet begin to sway. Or maybe it is the head-spin again […] The May sun is an unforgiving fire; it burns his blood dry. It also burns away any lingering grain of hope that the monsoons will arrive in time to end this third year of drought (1).

[17] State of Exception (2003:2).

The lines above combine the confluence of factors that have led him and his family, along with thousands of others, to starvation. While the drought proves the final nail in the coffin in this section, it is exacerbated by government policies and the exploitative terms of work for the landlord in his village.

The brief description of the landlord's actions in this section highlight the brutality with which people in Nitai's position were treated, exposing a shocking but consistent lack of empathy on the part of those with resources toward those with nothing. When he first starts to beg at the landlord's house they merely bolted the doors and ignored him but on his final day, "they had set their guards on him. One of them had brought his stick down on Nitai's back, his shoulders, his legs, while the other one had joked, 'Where are you going to hit this dog? He is nothing but bones, we don't even have to hit him. Blow on him and he'll fall back" (1-2). The casual brutality of the guards, their amusement at his suffering, and the dehumanizing reference to him as a dog highlights the attitude of the landlords and their lackeys towards the poor, an attitude Nitai has faced his whole life, as he is completely at their mercy.

Upon his final return to his hut, Nitai reflects on the deterioration of his life and the lives of his children, "He can see nothing in their eyes. In the past there was hunger in them, hunger and hope and the end of hope and pain, and perhaps even a puzzled resentment, a kind of muted accusation, but now there is nothing, a slow, beyond-the-end nothing" (2). Mukherjee's language concretizes the reality of starvation and poverty, challenging the reader to empathize particularly from the perspective of a parent who has failed at their most fundamental job. The "muted accusation" of his children, now gone, now turned into nothing, explores the progressive loss of humanity over a long period of suffering. When he kills his children, his daughter "takes fright at the animal moan issuing out of her father, a sound not possible of humans" (3). Nitai is represented as no

longer human, as beyond any bond with the world, or any sense of a possible future. In his act of homicide/suicide he is escaping only the threat of more pain, since "The landlord has explained to him what lies in store for his children if he does not pay off the interest on his first loan"(2). After he has killed his wife and four children, Nitai drinks the jerrycan of Folidol, "until he too is returned from the nothing in his life to nothing."

Nitai's act of violent resistance against his circumstances and his landlord provides the first disturbing example of what choices people may make when their lives and future have turned to nothing. It is, significantly, after his reflection on the landlord's threat to his children, that the reader sees Nitai finally come to a decision, "He knows what to do now" (2). The prologue elucidates the complex set of problems faced by rural peasants in late sixties West Bengal, including issues of caste, class, poverty, exploitation, and violence – providing the structural introduction to the narrative of the years 1967-1970.

Starting here, Mukherjee makes a clear and immediate statement about the conditions and situation for the poor in the context of the Naxalite movement and his sympathy seems clear. His book, indeed, as argued, makes an important intervention into representations of the Naxalite movement through precisely this type of detailed depiction of its material causes. However, as I will argue in the following sections, while the author is able to sympathize with those who turn to violence, he holds back from justifying their actions. Indeed, though he launches a solid critique of state violence in the main text, the epilogue, almost an inversion of the prologue here, ultimately justifies state violence and allows the Maoist struggle to be subsumed into war on terror discourse.

Representations of police violence in *The Lives of Others*: critique and justification

The police in Mukherjee's text are represented as tools of a larger machine. They are, like the police in the final scene of *The God of Small Things*, "History's henchmen", "[i]mpelled by feelings that [a]re […] wholly impersonal" (Roy 292), and yet omnipotent in their wielding of power. Police violence across all three texts, through this type of characterization, becomes normalized, expected, and repeated. Pranav Jani highlights this feature of Roy's novel in his analysis, suggesting that her representation of power, ultimately meted out by the police, has "the limitation of only being able to describe differential locations of power struggles without imagining their transcendence" (230). The same could be said not only for *The Lowland,* but also for *The Lives of Others,* in the way the latter establishes a critique of the police, but ultimately is unable to imagine any resolution beyond a justification that relies on a logic of 'lesser of two evils' in response to a terrorist threat.

The critique of the police in *The Lives of Others* centers on the tension between the legal and extralegal frameworks in which state violence operates, and points out the ways that the violence/terror of the Naxalites and the police mirror one another, with radicalization occurring on both sides. In the context of the contemporaneous war on terror, recognizing the ambiguity inherent in violence and in the source of terror is imperative to interrogate discourses which mobilize rapidly increasing and expanding state violence. However, despite its critical representation of the police, police violence is simultaneously justified through its representation as impersonal and omnipotent, and in the distinction between police violence and the explicitly criminalized violence of the Naxalites. The critique therefore stalls in its depiction of the inherent tensions in state and non-state terror, offering neither the possibility of state accountability to legal or humanist frameworks, nor any potential for the transcendence of this violent struggle.

The impersonal nature of the police emerges early on in the narrative of the main Naxalite character, Supratik, who leaves his upper-middle class home to join the rural movement. After witnessing the police standing guard to protect a local landlord smuggling grain to the black market in the village in which they are embedded, one of Supratik's comrades explains the role of the police as, "[p]rotecting the criminals from the honest", the state's "biggest instrument of control and repression" (153). The police here are represented abstractly and objectified as an "instrument" of the state. Even the specificity of the scene, taking place at night, when Supratik and his comrades can only identify the figures in the dark by making out their uniforms, reinforces this image.

The novel is consistent in this representation of the police as impersonal and also establishes an image of police omnipotence in relation to the people:

> Throughout history, in every single nation in the world, this class of paid servant of the state has turned against its own people, terrorized them, beaten and tortured them, unleashed untold misery and repression, like those illnesses where the body's own immune cells have gone so horribly wrong that they whip around and attack the harbouring body itself. (360)

The above passages both establish the police as impersonal and omnipotent, and serve to invert a traditional understanding of their actions as taking place within legal frameworks. In the Naxalites' view, the police are "protecting the criminals from the honest" and "terror[izing]" the population; they are a disease, attacking the body of the people. The reversal here is not merely the conception of the police, but of the source of terror itself. The use of the word "terrorize," along with the figurative language aimed at both dehumanizing the police and amplifying the threat they pose, directly reverses contemporary discourses on terror, which use the same methods, including the metaphor

of the virus to describe terrorist activity.[18] The disease of police violence however, is arguably worse, described as "auto-immune," a powerful metaphor for the body politic self-destructing that emphasizes the betrayal inherent in state violence against its own citizens.

Contemporary anthropological studies on state and police violence in India have increasingly focused on this inherent ambiguity in the role of the police. In her analysis of 'encounter killings' and routinized political violence, Beatrice Jauregui explains,

> while state officials charged with maintaining law and order are ideally supposed to remain "above the fray" in any sort of fracas and to quell the violence […] in fact police will often act as anything but disinterested parties. Sometimes police will passively allow violence to proceed without hindrance […] at other times, they will actively participate on behalf of one party or another in a conflict. ("Law and Order" 375)

The simultaneity of police identity as both impersonal state representatives and as tools in personal political struggles raises questions about the legitimacy of state violence. The police, in the quotation above, and in Mukherjee's text, are being directed, not by objective legal frameworks, but by something that floats between the legal and extralegal depending on circumstances.

Veena Das and Deborah Poole make a similar argument about the police, suggesting that "[i]t is precisely because they also act as representatives of the state that they are able to move across – and thus muddy – the seemingly clear divide separating legal and extralegal forms of punishment and enforcement" (14). The police in Mukherjee's novel consistently move across this line. Beatings and torture during

[18] Lord Robertson, NATO Secretary General, 2002: "The virus of insecurity and terrorism seems to be spreading"; Tony Blair, British Prime Minister, 2003: "a new and deadly virus has emerged. The virus is terrorism, whose intent is to inflict destruction is unconstrained by human feeling."

interrogations, the countless 'encounter' killings during the crackdown on the Naxalite movement, and the arbitrary arrests of villagers regardless of age or gender, all demonstrate their ability to engage in extralegal forms of punishment and enforcement with impunity.

The extralegal capacity of police violence significantly increases as the text narrates the declaration of President's rule in Bengal, and the motivated use of the term "terrorism" to enable extreme responses to perceived threats. When local police in the villages struggle to put down the Naxalites:

> [t]he Home Minister, Jyoti Basu, apparently at the request of the Chief Superintendent of the police forces of the 'districts afflicted by terrorism', had given orders for the EFR and military police to be deployed. The big landlords of the area, who had the police in their pockets, and most of the politicians too, had got together, both in public and in private, and used their combined power to pull the levers at the topmost level. (366)

The emphasis in the passage on both public and private realms combines the official/objective and personal/subjective spheres which are enfolded into state violence, and which grant even questionably-motivated actions the state's full authority. This authority goes even beyond control of the police, as indicated by the introduction of the "military police," a reminder of the indeterminacy of the semantic categories of civil/military which collapse in states of exception, like that of President's Rule and expand the state's coercive powers. The deployment of the military police is connected here to the specificity of the phrase "districts afflicted by terrorism," alluding to official statements that often present terrorism as a virus and that enters the narrative as a kind of coded language that enables and justifies a significant increase in the quantity and quality of force to be used.

The escalation in police violence in response to "terrorism" is further articulated when Supratik narrates the death of his friend and comrade, Badal:

> he had been smoked out of his slum by the police, who had thrown a Molotov cocktail on the street outside – it was President's Rule in the state now, the second time in as many years; the police could do anything now, not that they couldn't when there was a government in place, mind you, but they could do it with the *overt* blessing of the state machinery now – had thrown a Molotov cocktail, then entered each shack on the excuse that some slum-resident was doing his usual terrorism stuff, and had rounded up about fourteen young men. (421)

The repetition of "now," the narration of extralegal police tactics, and the note that the excuse for increased violence is terrorism highlights the way a state of exception, predicated on putting down a terrorist threat, provides an "overt blessing" for the radicalization of police violence. Though it is not the first time the text presents state and non-state terror as mirroring one another, this scene compellingly depicts how the use of Molotov cocktails, clear weapons of terror, are subsumed by the state for use against a population only tentatively presented as a real threat: "some slum-resident was doing his usual terrorism stuff." The counter-terrorist mandate of the state overtly blesses not only violence in response to alleged terrorism, but concrete instances of state *terror* against an economically disadvantaged community in which terrorist activity has been classified as "usual."

The war on terror and metalepsis in the final epilogue: critique and demand

While the 1960s sections of *The Lives of Others* explore the nature of excessive state violence when mobilized against a terrorist threat, the final epilogue, set in 2012,

narrates an act of non-state terror against the civilian population, concretely connecting the earlier movement with contemporary Maoist violence in the war on terror era, and marking a significant turn in Naxalite narratives. In this section, when terrorism has shifted meaning post-9/11,[19] and as Maoist violence in the so-called Red Corridor has famously become the "biggest internal security challenge"[20] facing India, the novel connects the specificity of the Maoist threat in India to the global war on terror context, critiquing not only the radicalization of police tactics, but the motivated use of metalepsis in counter-terrorist discourse.

As Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton explain, in contemporary war on terror discourse,

> the threat of the (post)colonial terrorist is presented as a primary trigger for retaliatory action. This causal logic forms a striking instance of what Spivak calls "metalepsis": where an effect of colonial discourse (here, the terrorist) is presented as a cause; or where a focus on the emotional-aesthetic connotations of terror is made logically to override awareness of the imperial interests that produced terrorism. (11)

[19] New Terrorism, according to Arun Kundnani, is distinguished from "old terrorism of nationalist or leftist political violence" (117), and is broadly applied as a reason for an escalation in state violence. Kundnani explains, "It was in the 1980s that the template of the war on terror was first hammered out: a fight against terrorism as ideological cover for state violence directed at those resisting US and Israeli power, whether they happened to be terrorists or not; a selective use of the term "terrorism" to exclude all those state and nonstate actors using violence to achieve our political ends" (45). Though Kundnani's analysis is set in a different context, his categories and the shifting use of the term "terrorism" can be useful in a reading of Indian State responses to the Maoists as they occur within the context of the global war on terror.

[20] Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, 2006.

I read the epilogue of Mukherjee's book as critical of this metaleptic move in its attention to the ways that systematic and sustained state violence create the very threat the state claims to protect against. However, as with earlier critical representations of state and police violence, the text undercuts this critique by ending the section with an attack on civilians that cognitively demands state violence in response.

In the brief pages leading up to the anticipated explosion of a commuter train, with which the novel ends, Mukherjee sympathetically articulates the substantive material causes which compel Sabita Kumari, the tribal leader of the sabotage group, to join the Maoists - reasons predicated on land expropriation, the experience of both over- and under-policing in her community, and personal tragedy stemming from systematic violence and inequality. After the rape and murders of her younger sisters as punishment for resisting a moneylender's attempt to take over the family's land, "The police at the nearest station, […] refused to issue an FIR [First Information Report] in response to Sabita's complaint unless she fellated the duty officer; more action would be taken according to the escalation in services she provided" (501). Here, the police are cast not only as enablers for rapists and murderers, but as exploiting their position of power to demand sex in exchange for legal action in an instance of under-policing. Simultaneously, police actions in this section are represented as a form of terrorism when they act against those who resist the government takeover of tribal land for mining interests: "The campaign of intimidation began: a house looted and then razed to the ground; someone maimed for life after being hauled off to prison on the flimsiest of excuses and beaten in lock-up, a girl raped; a well poisoned; a man shot" (502). The representation of both the under- and over-policing of the tribal community is attentive to the impact this has on the people affected, and connects such experiences with the choice to violently resist.

For Sabita and her comrades, the issue has become one of mere survival. The tribal people in this section see participation in the Maoist insurgency as their last remaining option: "They had a choice: to be snuffed out overnight by the world or to take on the world and wrest something from it; not very much, just a little, just to survive and live like a human, not an animal. This was the hope the Maoists offered […]" (502). I take up the gender dynamic of this representation of Sabita and her experiences and reasons for joining the resistance in the next chapter, but here I would like to draw out how this personal background and understanding of Sabita's position provides a distinct counter-narrative to metaleptic argument of the state, both in India, but also, for the novel's Western readers, more broadly across the globe.

Arguably, Sabita's narrative is effective in getting a Western audience to think differently about the motivations of terrorist acts by deferring and defamiliarizing the act of terror that ends the epilogue. Because the majority of the section centers on Sabita's life, a full awareness of her role in an act of terror against the civilian population is deferred, emphasizing her experiences and reversing typical narratives which highlight the impact of terrorism on the victims. Further, both the terrorist and the act of terror are defamiliarized for the Western reader through Sabita's gendered subjectivity, and through the setting of the Maoist conflict against the Indian state. By thus deferring and defamiliarizing the act of terror, the narrative circumvents the metalepsis of war on terror discourse, explained by Boehmer and Morton as the "emotional-aesthetic connotations of terror [that are] made logically to override awareness of the imperial interests that produc[e] terrorism" (11).

However, Mukherjee's attention to the contexts of violent resistance is ultimately undermined by his decision to have Sabita target the civilian population – a decision which generates the desire and demand for police protection even in its most excessive

and extralegal forms. This decision is not a given. Sabita's previous actions were directed specifically against the state: "she had killed five officers at the Ranchi police station, all those who had leered and asked for sex when she had gone to complain" (501); she had "blown up military vehicles […] raided outposts of the Indian Reserve Battalion and blown up their buildings, she has burned security vehicles sent out to protect the Prime Minister's village road-building program" (503). These actions could be read in a potentially differentiated context of violent resistance to injustice and oppression. Instead, the novel ends where the war on terror ostensibly begins – with an explosion and the deaths of innocents. Despite the work of the novel to engage with the long history of exceptional and excessive state violence, and to frame contemporary terrorism as response rather than cause, the ending demands and justifies the euphemistic "security" apparatus of state which has been normalized in the war on terror.

Conclusion

Despite the representational moves Mukherjee makes to materially and politically contextualize the Naxalite movement, the novel ends by unequivocally criminalizing Maoist actions in establishing the civilian population as its target. In contrast, police violence is justified not only through its representation as abstract and omnipotent in the early sections of the text, but also as structurally demanded by the act of terror of the final epilogue. Though state violence is critiqued throughout, and the novel depicts how state and non-state terror mirror one another, it persists in a criminalization of one side, and thereby justifies all forms of state violence under the 'lesser of two evils' logic of states of exception, including that of the global war on terror.

In its inability to think beyond the justification of state violence, the novel both reproduces state violence and evacuates the compelling work that it has done to encourage an understanding of the material and political motivations behind violent resistance. As I have argued, the novel ends by demanding precisely the type of state and police violence that, as a whole, it attempts to critique. An alternative imagining of both state and non-state violence is needed to move past the ingrained discourses of the war on terror which call for increased security as the answer to the terrorist threat. Or, as Jani suggests, novels might imagine the transcendence rather than mere description of these sites of conflict between the state and the people. As war on terror and nationalist discourses increasingly escalate the violence stemming from the state in India and across the globe, there is an urgent need to reconceptualize this relationship between state violence and violent resistance, even – perhaps especially – in the imaginative realm of fiction. The following chapter explores precisely this question, focusing on gender and its relationship to state violence and violent resistance.

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Chapter 4: Post-Magic: The Female Naxalite at 50 in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and Neel Mukherjee's *A State of Freedom*

2017 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising in Naxalbari that sparked an agrarian revolutionary movement, the legacy of which can be seen today in the militancy of the Maoists, famously described as India's "biggest internal security challenge."[21] The anniversary generated renewed debate about the impact, history, and consequences of the 1967 movement, prompting periodicals across India to run a wide array of articles and reflections analyzing what caused its breakdown in the face of state violence and internal disagreements, and where and in what form the movement stands today in relation to escalating state violence and structural inequality in tribal areas targeted for resource extraction.[22] As Alpa Shah and Dhruv Jain argue in a recent article reviewing the "at least 50 scholarly or political books, several novels, and numerous essays" on the subject since 2007, "[t]here are not many other issues that have attracted as much scholarly attention in the last decade as India's Naxalite or Maoist movement" (2017).

To mark the anniversary, *Frontier Weekly*, a radical publication established in 1968 in Calcutta, ran a series of articles under the subject line "Naxalbari at 50." What emerges from the series, which includes memoirs of the time period and reflections on where the movement stands today, is a picture laced with nostalgia yet clearly attempting to articulate both what caused the movement's breakdown in the face of state violence and internal disagreements and where it stands today.

[21] Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, 2006.
[22] See, for example, 'Naxalbari 50' series in *Frontier Weekly*, and opinion pieces and editorials in *The Statesman,* and articles in *The Hindu* and *Hindustan Times*

In these articles, as well as in historiographical accounts, the Naxalite Movement of 1967 is cast as both continuity and break: "a continuation of the peasant struggles of Telengana, Punapra-Bhailar and the Tebhaga movement […]the Santal Rebellion, Munda Rebellion, Faraji Rebellion, Indigo Mutiny and other peasant rebellions" (Rana 2017), and simultaneously a "historical turning point in the history of Indian people's struggles against feudal oppression and imperialism" (Bhattacharyya, 2014, 274) in its focus on capturing state power. Sumanta Banerjee, perhaps the foremost writer on the movement, opens his piece by declaring,

> This is not a sentimental nostalgic account, but a tribute to a few […] brave souls, who dared to break out from their social environs and traditional upbringing, to join a revolutionary movement that tried to revive the moral ethos of our polity and society with the aim of creating a new political order based on economic equity and social justice. It was not a smooth journey for many among them, who had to wrestle within their inner selves in trying to shed the traditional conservative values on which they were brought up on the one hand, and reconciling with the violent excesses of the movement that hurt their humanitarian values on the other (2017).

The tension between celebration and mourning clearly emerges through this tribute to the Naxalites, which also acknowledges the "violent excesses of the movement." The articles all struggle with this tension, not historically, but in present debates that continue to vex the contemporary Maoist struggle. The authors cite Naxalbari not as a failed revolution, but as a "revolutionary legacy" (Rana 2017) even as they explore why it has not yet succeeded in its aims: "50 years later it is the same old story of how to redefine the Movement and develop unity in action. Where is a

breakthrough? That's a rhetorical question posed by all groups and individual radicals now celebrating the 50th anniversary of Naxalbari uprising" (Basu, 2017).

Yet something else emerges when reading through the pieces in *Frontier*, - something also historically resonant – the predominance of male narratives. While the articles in *Frontier* mainly center on reflections by male participants and witnesses of the movement, attention emerged in other news venues to the figure of Shanti Munda, one of the women who fired the arrows that killed the policeman in the incident that triggered the events of Naxalbari. In a piece on Munda in *The Statesman*, Jayita Mukherjee proclaims the great strides taken in the movement to provide equity for female fighters. Tracing the original condemnation of female participation in the Naxalite Movement by its leaders in the late 1960s, Mukherjee notes that nearly half of the fighters in the PGLA are now women, and suggests that "[t]his has given them a sense of empowerment, indeed a new-found faith to chart out the destiny of their lives" (2017). The attention to women and their relation to and participation in the historical Naxalite Movement and the contemporary Maoist struggle has gained traction within studies on the Naxalites, as writers have begun to "attempt to 'fill' the gendered gap of this archive" (Srila Roy, 2012, 3).

2017 was also the year Arundhati Roy returned to the fiction scene, releasing the long-anticipated follow up to her prize winning 1997 novel, *The God of Small Things.* Her new novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, along with Neel Mukherjee's *A State of Freedom,* published the same month, make significant contributions to the emerging canon of the Naxal novel in English.[23] Both Roy and Mukherjee have addressed the

[23] A category Nina Martyris establishes in her article, "The Naxal Novel" (2014).

Naxalite Movement in earlier works,[24] yet these most recent novels represent a shift in focus, not only from the authors' own writings, but from dominant trends in both historical and fictional treatments of the Naxalite and Maoist movements, in their attention to female Maoist guerilla fighters.

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness and *A State of Freedom* each feature the narrative of a contemporary female fighter in the People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA), the militant wing of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), who become the voice of the Maoist struggle from within the novels' polyphonic stories of characters struggling to survive at the margins of Indian society. This chapter analyzes the nature of these representations, ultimately arguing that the figure of the female Naxalite in both novels can be read as 'post-magic,' a term I develop in contradistinction to historical and literary representations of the female Naxalite of the earlier 1967 Movement due to the novels' interrogations of the agency and empowerment ascribed to armed female fighters, and their suggestion that to fight is no longer tied to the real possibility of revolution, as it was in the late 1960's, but merely a choice of the manner of one's death.

In order to examine how and why such a shift takes place over time, I begin with an overview of questions of gender within the Naxalite Movement, focusing on recent interventions into dominant historiography and highlighting the ways in which critics have maintained attributions of magic to the agential possibilities of historical Naxalite revolutionary violence for women. Against such liberatory imaginings, I analyze how ascriptions of agency slide into ambivalence in the novels of Roy and Mukherjee, as the authors represent the 'agency' of contemporary Maoist revolutionary violence as severely limited, suggesting that the only real 'choice' afforded to their contemporary Naxalite

[24] Roy referenced the Naxalites in *God of Small Things,* but more significantly in her non-fiction work *Walking with the Comrades* (2011), and Mukherjee's 2014 novel, *The Lives of Others* includes a Naxalite character and ends in the epilogue with a female member of the PGLA.

protagonists is *how* to die, as opposed to the hope for revolutionary change that imbued the earlier Naxalite Movement, which, as Bernard D'Mello argues, was "part and parcel of a (then) contemporary, worldwide impulse among radicals embracing the spirit of revolutionary humanism" (2018, 13).

Gender and Naxalite History

The question of gender and the Naxalite Movement is both timely and fraught. Overlooked in most scholarship until the 2000s, gender has emerged as an important lens through which to interpret the Movement – a fulcrum around which the complexity of Naxalite ideology and practice can be better deconstructed and analyzed. The current attention to gender in relation to the Naxalite Movement also relates to broader reinterpretations of revolutionary violence as critics increasingly move away from romantic conceptions of such violence as liberatory that emerged during the anticolonial era, to a more critical engagement with its complexities and contradictions.[25] These critiques aim to provide the space, as P.K. Malreddy suggests, "to register the ideological and organizational fractures that undermine the liberationist tendencies of the non-state violence 'from below'" (2016), and to explore the tension between romantic views (particularly on the Left) of revolutionary or resistant violence and the complex realities on the ground. Following this imperative, I suggest that centering gender in the critique and interrogation of the Naxalite Movement achieves a similar outcome in affording a clearer view of the Movement's "ideological and organizational fractures," while avoiding mere reversal by maintaining a vigorous critique of the state.

[25] See, for example, Arjun Appadurai's *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006) and Priyamvada Gopal on the Maoist conflict in India (2013).

Pushing back on romantic and ultimately flattening understandings of the figure of the Naxalite and the justifications for the violence of the Movement, new scholarship on gender is attentive to the complexities of history, cultural memory, and the multiplicity of experience. Two main concerns that emerge in this scholarship are, first, how normative conceptions of gender (that cast women as victims and men as either protectors or perpetrators) function to provide a moral imperative to revolutionary violence cast as good/protective against the bad/rapist violence of the state, and second, the interrogation of the agency and empowerment ascribed to female guerilla fighters in order to break down the widespread victim/agent binary for women in war, particularly in the global south.

Naxalite historiography has long focused, as have accounts of other instances of revolutionary violence, on gender-based assumptions that project women as victims and men as perpetrators of violence. In this binary, men who take part in revolutionary violence arise as protectors of victimized women and the state is cast as the violent threat that demands the protective violence of the revolutionaries (Srila Roy 2009, 2012; Sinha Roy, 2009; Parashar and Shah, 2016). Thus, according to Kimberly Hutchings, gender "provide[s] a kind of ethical shorthand, which helps to render certain kinds of violence intelligible" (2007), i.e., the "good violence" of the revolutionaries is contrasted, through the shorthand of gender, with the "bad violence" of the state.

In its rehearsal of this gendered narrative of positions of victimhood for women, and good or bad violence for men, Naxalite historiography has overlooked the multiplicity of the experiences of women within the Movement, focusing on female involvement in positions of support (Sinha Roy, 2009), and thereby maintaining female participants in what Pratibha Singh describes as "paradigms of domesticity" (2015). Not only is the variety of women's experiences as revolutionaries elided in such a narrative,

but everyday gendered violence within the Movement is rendered invisible as the necessity for cohesion within the ranks requires the preservation of violence on the part of the revolutionaries to always be 'good' in contrast to the 'bad' violence of the state. Srila Roy's recent work explores this dynamic and suggests that instances of sexual violence by party or guerilla members during the early stage of the Naxalite struggle were largely overlooked (2012).

Emerging scholarship on gender in relation to the Naxalite Movement and the contemporary guerilla struggle in India pushes back on romanticized figurations of the Movement and its participants, and emphasizes the need to interrogate and look beyond what Pratibha Singh calls the 'Naxalite icon' (2015). This figure is middle class, and, as Srila Roy explains, is "essentially a male one that is put into the service of a righteous revolutionary 'good' violence as against the 'bad' violence of the state" (2012, 55). Mallarika Sinha Roy also affirms that this figure, with the "essentialised characteristics of 'urban', 'educated', middle-class' […] and 'male'" has "usually go[ne] unchallenged" (2011, 67-68) in Naxalite historiography.

Responding to such elisions, recent interventions engage specifically with questions of gender in relation to the historical Naxalite Movement and its legacy in the contemporary Maoist guerilla struggle being waged in India today. In addition to the texts mentioned above, there is also increased attention in current scholarship to women within the ranks of contemporary Maoist guerilla fighters, including reflections on and interpretations of the rise in female participation in the armed struggle as members of the PLGA.

What emerges in these critical engagements with contemporary Maoist fighters is an impasse in postcolonial feminist ethics and theory that broadly sets interpretations of revolutionary violence for women as empowering and agential, against concerns of

feminist thinkers about the ends of such violence and if they can ever truly empower, or if, instead, they reaffirm and reproduce masculinist violence that ultimately supports patriarchal agendas and justifies increased state violence that largely impacts poor women (Singh, 2015; Parashar and Shah, 2016; Srila Roy, 2009; Hutchings, 2007).

As Kimberly Hutchings suggests, "feminist ethics is ultimately a contested negotiation of tensions between the ethical goals of feminism and the conditions of possibility of the realization of those goals in the world" (2007). In the following sections, I explore how literature has responded to this tension between the goals of feminism and the shifting "conditions of possibility" in the realization of the goals of the 1967 Naxalite Movement as compared to the contemporary Maoist guerilla struggle by focusing on the figure of the female tribal guerilla fighter. I argue that whereas the 1967 Naxalite Movement was imbued with an aura of hope and a belief in the material victory of the revolution, contemporary literature on the current Maoist struggle reveals an evacuation of such hope for social transformation, and presents instead a "post-magic" representation of female revolutionary violence centered on the individual, specifically in her choice of how to die.

'Those Were Magic Moments': Women and the Early Naxalite Movement of 1967-1975

As the title suggests, Mallarika Sinha Roy's *Gender and Radical Politics in India: Magic Moments of Naxalbari (1967-1975)*, emphasizes the magical quality of the early Naxalite Movement for female participants. She opens her book with an interviewee's description of the years of her participation in the Naxalite Movement in the late 1960s, "[t]hose were the best days of my life . . ." she says, "in those years I lived as a human

being . . . *seta chillo ekta ashchorjyo somoy* (Those were *magic moments*)" (2010, x). Sinha Roy suggests that the power of this metaphor is its ability to "convey [the] duality" of "[p]ersecution, pain and tribulation" along with "wonder, surprise and hope" (xi). The Naxalite Movement, as well as the earlier Telengana People's Struggle of 1946-1951, are often represented in this way, with women highlighting what they call "the magic of that time" (Kannabiran and Lalitha, 1989). The magic, or "wonder, surprise, and hope" which inhere in the early Naxalite and Telengana movements for female participants are tied to the potential of revolution to address, not only social and political, but also their gendered experiences of oppression. Sinha Roy explains, "[t]hose magic moments of Naxalbari signify women's expectation from that movement in tearing down all structures of oppression, including gender" (93), and can be tied, as D'Mello argues, to the global revolutionary impulse of the 1968 moment (2018).

In literature, a genre that, according to Sinha Roy, is able to capture "imaginary history"[26], Mahasweta Devi similarly constructs the magic of the 1967 Naxalite Movement in one of the few earlier instances of literature focused on a female Naxalite in her short story *Draupadi*, which, as Gayatri Spivak proclaims in a recent piece on the 50th anniversary of the Movement, was the text that "set the seal on Naxalbari for me and for generations to come" (2017).

Significantly, *Draupadi* centers on a female Naxalite and the story ends with precisely the duality of "persecution, pain and tribulation" and "wonder, surprise, and hope" that Sinha Roy argues characterizes the early Naxalite period for women participants. Anyone familiar with the story will remember the epiphany of the final

[26] Sinha Roy claims literature is a viable source of what she calls "imaginary history" in that it "captures what might have happened, how the events were visualized, thought through, and identifies what emotions fuelled those visualizations" (38).

scene - the radical triumph of the female Naxalite in the face of state police forces which have just tortured and raped her, expecting through such violence, to defeat her, yet upon summoning her, encounter the following provocation from a naked Draupadi:

> You asked them to make me up, don't you want to see how they made me? […] What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man? […] There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do? Come on, *counter* me – come on, *counter* me -? Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts, and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed *target*, terribly afraid (402).

The unexpected reversal of power dynamics along with the allusion to the mythical figure Draupadi creates the dramatic and magical triumph of the female figure in this scene, who is able to transform her mutilated body into a weapon against the state official, making him, as the final words of the story proclaim, "terribly afraid." Spivak has highlighted the significance of gender in this scene, arguing that "[i]t is when she crosses the sexual differential into the field of what could *only happen to a woman* that she emerges as the most powerful "subject," who, still using the language of sexual "honor," can derisively call herself "the object of your search," whom the author can describe as a terrifying superobject – "an unarmed target" (388).

In her gendered specificity, Draupadi is able to accomplish the transformation into "terrifying superobject" in this scene, embodying the "magic" of the early Naxalite Movement as described by Sinha Roy. As Spivak goes on to say, "I can be forgiven if I find in this an allegory of the woman's struggle within the revolution in a shifting historical moment" (389). The specificity of the historical moment of the late 1960s Naxalite Movement, in this reading of Spivak, Sinha Roy, and Mahasweta Devi has a

certain magic that inheres in it, and one that is ascribed in the memories of female Naxalites as a hope for success in a revolution that would address both general structural and specifically gendered oppression.

A similar hopeful articulation, if much less specifically focused on a Naxalite fighter emerges in reading Arundhati Roy's 1997 novel, *The God of Small Things,* and the figure of Ammu as an embodiment of female resistance, that though not directly connected, is presented as parallel and similar to the aura of Naxalism, as well as temporally contemporaneous with the historical movement. The novel insists on the value of the process of resistance through the narrative of Ammu, despite the inevitable consequences, the novel insists on the value of this resistance. Significantly, resistance/anger/rage and the subversive and resistant acts which are generated by these emotions insist on the value of the process despite the inevitable consequences that accompany such acts. The inclusion of desire, hope, and a vision of the future, along with the penalties and consequences, makes these acts revolutionary in intent if not in outcome.

While Ammu of *God of Small Things* is not a Naxalite herself, the movement's anger and violence is intertwined throughout the text with her act of resistance in her law-breaking relationship with Velutha. In the primary scene where the Naxalite movement is discussed in relation to the march which stops the family journey to Cochin, the marchers are described as connected with the emotional aura of the movement, "On their shoulders they carried a keg of ancient anger, lite with a recent fuse. There was an edge to this anger that was Naxalite, and new" (67). Ammu's own anger is similarly framed, with Roy employing the an exact repetition of the language of anger and edge to connect Ammu's attraction to Velutha and her decision to love him with a feeling of violent resistance:

> What was it that gave Ammu this Unsafe Edge? This air of unpredictability? It was what she had battling inside her. An unmixable mix. The infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber. It was this that grew inside her and eventually led her to love by night the man her children loved by day (40).

Here, Ammu's "Unsafe Edge", her "reckless rage of a suicide bomber" echoes the anger and edge of the Naxalites, but is also framed as particularly gendered, combined as it is with the "infinite tenderness of motherhood", making it an "unmixable mix". By connecting the workers who march for parliamentary reforms as well as Ammu, who resists the love laws and her own gendered role as widow and mother, to the aura of resistance and anger of the Naxalite movement, Roy expands Naxalite discourse beyond canonical representations of the middle-class male Naxalite to consider a far wider spectrum of those who resist existing orders which structure the boundaries not only of class, but also caste and gender.

Additionally, Ammu's resistance connects with the Naxalite movement and the revolutionary moment of 1967, which is significant for its newness and also its hope for producing a different future. Ammu's attraction to Velutha, established as consistent with her personality and the angry edge she harbors, explicitly combines this 'reckless rage' with hope. As she watches him with her daughter, "She *hoped* it had been him that had raised his flag and knotted arm in anger. She *hoped* that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against." Further, as Brinda Bose suggests, though some have read Ammu and Velutha's actions as futile or doomed,

> To lunge, knowingly and deliberately, for what one must not have—for what will result in shame and defeat—is to believe that the very process of the pursuit would render

the ultimate penalty worthwhile. To know that there may be death at the end of it—and still to desire — is not necessarily to accept a just punishment but to believe that such a death is not a shame and a defeat. There are repeated indications in the novel that the choices of those who desire (and perhaps, die for it) are deliberate; the options have been weighed, and the transgressive experience valued above its possible penalty. The text's insistence on the value of the process of resistance, despite the inevitable consequences that accompany such acts, makes resistant acts in the novel revolutionary in intent if not in outcome.

This argument is borne out by the ending of the novel, which, though it occurs after the reader knows of the outcome of the relationship between Ammu and Velutha, ends on a hopeful and forward looking note, freezing the narration at the moment of promise encapsulated in Ammu's final utterance, and the text's final word: "Tomorrow." (321). As Bose suggests, though the characters do face the ultimate penalty for their actions, the text would seem to insist that along with this defeat, there is simultaneously a hope for a different future, which the final section of the novel shares, a duality which Srila Roy defines as the 'magic' of Naxalbari.

Yet, this hope, and the manner in which it is achieved in the text, in precisely its historic specificity, does not persist beyond the early phase. After the brutal repression of the movement by the early 1970s, though the Maoist struggle continues to the present day, the hope of the late 1960s period and its connection to a global revolutionary spirit, did not survive beyond that historical period. As Bernard D'Mello argues of the second phase of the Naxalite/Maoist movement from 1977-2003, which applies beyond these dates, due to the overdevelopment of the Indian state and its partnership with transnational investors and multinational companies "a real revolution in any country on the periphery of the world capitalist system now seemed hard to even conceive of, let

alone bring about, compared to the "1968" period when the feasibility of radical change was palpable" (170).

In the next section I argue that the representation of the contemporary female Naxalite in the form of the Maoist guerilla fighter in the fiction published in 2017—Neel Mukherjee's *A State of Freedom* and Arundhati Roy's *Ministry of Utmost Happiness*—reflects a shift from the hope nostalgically associated with the earlier movements, to what I call a "post-magic" perspective on revolutionary violence. No longer focused on the hope for or potential of a total social and political transformation through a successful revolution, the post-magic perspective on Maoist violence in the novels of Roy and Mukherjee demythologizes the Party in its attention to its flaws, particularly in relation to gender and in its violent excesses. In addition, the representations of contemporary female Maoist fighters, while sympathetic to the precarity of the characters in the context of the material and structural violence faced by tribal women, refuse to justify their choice to take up arms by suggesting that such a choice is agential or empowering. Instead, both novels emphasize that to take up a gun as a member of the PLGA is to choose to die because of that choice, and in their representations of their characters' struggle with that knowledge, draw attention to the problem with attributing agency and self-determination to participation in violence, since, as Srila Roy suggests, "agency does not usually involve the use of violence; 'agency' is rather the freedom from violence or force" (2009).

Post-Magic: Representations of the Contemporary Female Guerilla Fighter

Gender makes the question of the capacity for violence and the implications of taking up arms complex from an ethical standpoint, as Hutchings has suggested in her

analysis of feminist ethics and revolutionary violence (2007). One could easily argue that the choice to join the PLGA for women is a natural and legitimate one based on the widespread structural and material violence faced by women within both private and public spheres. In both Mukherjee and Roy's novels, the female characters who join the PLGA do so in large part because of the structural violence around them, yet, their choice to join is evacuated in the texts of the hope of actual change in the body politic and is centered instead on change in the individual body – in the choice to fight and die. Additionally, and in an important change from Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others* (2014), though both characters' stories articulate their reasons for joining, neither commit nor describe specific acts of violence in the pages of the novels, thereby ameliorating the negative response engendered by such acts for Western readers as explained in the last chapter. Though Sabita of *The Lives of Others* makes similar claims to the female protagonists from Roy and Mukherjee's 2017 novels, her act of violence resists the sympathy that these new novels center more directly on.

In *A State of Freedom*, Mukherjee develops several distinct narratives that feature characters on the margins of Indian society struggling to survive and to find, in their various ways, small spaces of freedom. One of the sections follows the lives of two childhood friends from a small village, tracing their divergent paths as Milly becomes a domestic worker in the city, and Soni stays behind in the village and ultimately joins the PLGA. This choice is contextualized in the novel by both material and structural violence emerging from the state, the Party, and domestic spaces. This section of the text opens with an act of violence by the Maoists against a local tribal youth, "[t]he first image that came to her when she thought of that day was the way the blood had arced and sprayed as they threw her brother's right hand into the surrounding bushes" (165).

In starting at this moment, Mukherjee's novel seems to invite the reader to critique the Maoists, yet the remaining narrative of the village and the experiences of Soni, Milly, and their families reveals that the critique is not limited to the Party, but extends to encompass patriarchal violence within the domestic space through Milly's drunk and abusive father, and the structural violence faced in the everyday lives of tribal people depicted in the school where the teacher is absent more than present, and in the lack of medical care which leads to the suicide of Soni's mother, who cannot find a doctor to operate on a cancerous tumor. Mukherjee builds upon the structural violences of inequality overseen by the state to the culmination that takes place in the forest, when Soni's sister is violently raped by Forest Department officials as she and Soni collect Kendu leaves. The scene is emblematic of the precarity of the tribal villagers as Soni and her sister are made vulnerable by a new rule they were unaware of: needing a license to collect Kendu leaves, a rule, as the text suggests, is yet another example of the government making "their lives more and more impossible […] because big companies wanted the land" (178).

Soni's sister's rape is presented didactically in the text, explaining to readers the helplessness of the tribal communities, especially the precarity of women, but also, in the narrative of Soni, as the moment in which she learns that the freedom she has is to choose how she dies. After witnessing the aftermath of the rape in her sister's slow recovery and changed demeanor, the turning point for Soni comes when the Maoists put on a play in the village that echoes her sister's rape by the forest officials,

> She sensed an ultimatum in the play that she was seeing. Two of the samaj sewi came onstage, a man and a woman, and asked how long the people here were going to put up with such humiliation, such indignities? Were they not humans, too, or were their lives as nothing to the big people. She noticed that her sister's

> trembling had transmitted itself – it was she, Soni, who was now the core of the tremor. She was approaching the realization of something fateful in herself. Something her sister had said after she came back, something Soni through she had forgotten, now inserted itself in her head – just a few words: 'I didn't put up a fight because they would have killed me otherwise' (194).

Soni decides to join the Party at this moment; a decision that is further elaborated in distinction to the helplessness faced in relation to the state. As the text explains, the Party "found sympathetic audience in the villagers whose lives of unchanging poverty and misery and helplessness needed a radically new kind of hope, which the militants provided" (195). The language here is almost utopic – "radical hope." Yet it turns out that what is radical about this hope is not so what is so often associated with radicalism – its revolutionary potential – but rather than the hope provided by the militants, is merely the decision to fight back, to die (rather than live) on one's own terms. Though not revolutionary in that the overthrow of the state is never represented as possible in the novel, the radical nature of the hope provided by the militants is the equality that comes from also inflicting violence. As Soni reflects once she is the forest: "'If you kill, we kill too. If you have guns, we have guns,' as one comrade had put it so simply. Here was a kind of equality, at last" (198).

The final articulation of the movement's impact on Soni is elaborated the last time we see her character before her death, in her walk through the liminal space of the forest's edge with her friend Milly. Narrated through the perspective of Milly, this scene draws out the tensions inherent in the Party, both between the Party and the villagers, and within the militant figure herself, who, once she joins, has no way out. Though Soni has found a space of freedom, this freedom is severely circumscribed by the inevitability of her death, of which both she and the text are painfully aware.

Soni's explanation of her choice to fight with the Maoists includes assertions of agency, gender equity, and the decision to choose how one dies and to do so honorably, yet the scene, filtered through Milly, highlights the tension between the party line and personal affect,

> The revolutionary's mask still intact on her face, Soni repeated her earlier words, 'What's to fear? We'll all die anyway. This death is more honorable […] The lives of people like us are nothing. But you can make something of *your* life, stop being nothing.' […] Suddenly, Soni's mask slipped and she said, in a completely different tone, 'Yes, this will take my life. If I go outside the jungle, I'll be killed. I can only get out after the revolution.' Something sounded extinguished inside her (216).

While agency can be ascribed to the fact that Soni makes this choice, which she claims provides an honorable identity, her choice also clearly comes with a different type of constriction and limitation in her acknowledgement that "this will take [her] life." The text thus interrogates this agency, relating to what Srila Roy has noted in relation to women's empowerment and the Maoist struggle, that "agency does not usually involve the use of violence; 'agency' is rather the freedom from violence or force" (2009). In addition to the complexity of Soni's experience, Milly's conversation with her brother reminds the reader of the complicated relationship between the Maoists and the tribal villagers, who, despite Soni's protestations about the positive relationship between the two groups, as Milly's brother explains, "are caught between the police and the Party. They play both. It's a risky game but they – we – have to survive too, naa?" (217).

Ultimately the question is what kind of agency or power comes from arming oneself against the state? And how has it changed since 1967? In "Problems of War and Strategy," Mao claims, "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" (1938). This

formulation of the liberatory and agential capacity of violence – the capacity to overthrow the state, to achieve a revolution, resonates with anticolonial thinkers such as Fanon, who believed that violence was not only practical, but the necessary way of overthrowing existing structures of power. History supports such claims in some ways, given that armed uprisings and insurgencies were pivotal in ushering in Independence in the former colonies. However, in the war on terror era when globalized capital and the military industrial complex can be perceived as working in tandem to create "death-worlds", the term employed by Mbembe to refer to places such as the tribal areas of India where mining companies are displacing people, taking up a gun could be argued, not to be a realistic path to political power, but merely a way to assert the status of bare life – a way of marking oneself outside the protection of the state and ensuring you will be categorized as one who "must die" (Mbembe, 2003). Soni's choice does precisely that – places her within the framework of bare life, a consequence she is aware of, and the text affirms. To choose death hardly seems a positive articulation of agency in the novel, which focuses instead on the limitations of the 'radical hope' the Maoists offer, and interrogates the reality of what can be accomplished on the ground.

Roy's novel too establishes the 'choice' to joining the Maoists for Revathy, her female guerilla character, as limited and circumscribed in a manner that interrogates the level of agency and empowerment that might be assumed to go hand in hand with revolutionary violence. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, the gendered representation of the Maoists exposes the problems in mythologizing their revolutionary struggle by reframing it as a desperate response to material as well as epistemic violence, that for women circulates through both the quotidian and spectacular, the private, and the public, both within the forest and the party and outside in the villages or at the hands of the police. In the novel's attention to the Party's own flaws and similarities to dominant

hegemonic patriarchy, Revathy's decision to join the PLGA is cast as despairing – a choice she makes knowing she will die in the fight, but, unlike earlier female revolutionaries, a choice that is not inflected with the hope that forms of everyday violence against women and excessive state violence against tribal people will end. Rather than fighting based on a hope for change, or with a sense of magic, Revathy, like Soni, joins the PLGA because there is simply nothing else to do in the face of the material and epistemological violence experienced by tribal people.

Revathy's letter, which appears towards the end of *Ministry* narrates her story, and how she became part of the PLGA. The letter begins by situating Revathy's first articulation of the desire to resist as stemming from the violence her father visits upon her mother, "I wanted to be a lawyer and put my father behind bars forever" (425). The specificity of the gendered experience, and women's vulnerability to violence in the public and private spheres, is emphasized throughout the letter, with Revathy noting the "[m]aximum hatred police had for women workers" (426). Revathy's rape by the police affirms this intensity while simultaneously connecting it with the private patriarchal violence of her father toward her mother. After being captured in a village outside the forest, Revathy awakes to one of the police officers "cutting my skin with a knife blade", a direct repetition of the violence her father inflicted on her mother, creating an awareness that women are vulnerable across social spaces, from multiple sides, and regardless of their politics. After her rape, she acknowledges, "[t]his is the experience of so many women in the forest. From that I took courage" (429). It is not merely her role in the PLGA that makes her vulnerable to sexual violence, but her gender, the inclusion of her mother's story, as well as the allusion to the experiences of "many women in the forest" that establishes the universal nature of violence against women.

The Party in *Ministry* is also implicated in the patriarchal structures that make women vulnerable to such violence. Revathy writes, "[p]arty says men and women are equal, but still they never understand" (431). Importantly, her description has a temporal element: "still they never understand" emphasizes the inability of the Party, over a fifty year period, to grapple with and address the tension between a revolutionary ideology which centers on class and a dominant hegemonic discourse which occludes the everyday violence experienced by women. Whatever hope inhered in the earlier movement that structural change – including the dismantling of patriarchy – would occur has dissipated over the long years of struggle as suggested by the weary and despairing tone, indicating the persistence of such a misunderstanding that, unlike the female revolutionaries of earlier periods, she does not believe can or will change.

The lack of hope, or the quality of "post-magic" revolutionary violence, that I am attempting to draw out is further elaborated in the way Revathy frames her decision to join the PLGA as a negative but necessary choice, rather than one invested in a utopian vision of the future. Revathy offers no description of what she hopes to achieve in the struggle, but rather a canonical list of what she cannot do – live outside, leave her party, live otherwise:

> I *cannot* live outside like them. My Party is my Mother and Father. Many times it does many *wrong* things. Kills *wrong* people. Women join because they are revolutionaries but also because they *cannot bear their sufferings at home*. Party says men and women are equal, but still they *never understand*. I know Comrade Stalin and Chairman Mao have done many good things and many *bad things also*. But still I *cannot* leave my party. I *cannot* live outside […] I *cannot* go on hunger-strike and make requests. In the forest every day police is burning killing raping poor people. Outside there is you people to fight and take up issues. But

inside there is us only. So I am returned to Dandakaranya to live and *die* by my gun (431, emphasis added).

Revathy's gendered experience and understanding of the Party's flaws, along with the acknowledgement that the Party, "does many wrong things" and "kills wrong people", is a clear critique of contemporary Maoist ideology and its failure to adequately address and reform its gender politics, and reveals Revathy does not necessarily believe in the Party's capacity to do so – a belief and hope that was central in women's participation in the earlier Naxalite Movement. An additional reason for the evacuation of hope in her choice to fight is explained in the letter through a description of the escalation and radicalization of state violence in tribal areas, "[a]ll police, Cobras, Greyhounds, Andhra Police would be everywhere. Hundreds of Party workers were killed like anything" (426). A few sentences later, "In 2008 the situation much worse inside the forest. Operation Green Hunt is announced by Government. War against People. Thousands of police and paramilitary are in the forest. Killing adivasis, burning villages" (426). This situation frames her 'choice' to join the PLGA, and she ends her letter by explaining her inability to do anything else, since, "In the forest every day police is burning killing raping poor people." Though state violence is framed as necessitating Revathy's decision to "live and die by [her] gun" the implication, simultaneously is that years of police repression, brutality and violence against tribal communities, which Roy has documented in *Walking with the Comrades*, has pushed the depiction of the Maoist struggle in Roy's novel towards one of futility.

Both Revathy and Soni choose to die through their choice to take up arms. Yet, in an additional layer of gendered exploration of the role of the guerilla fighter, Roy and Mukherjee also have both characters refuse marital and maternal roles. Of the two novels, *Ministry* is the most specific in this refusal, and Revathy's narrative of her rape,

pregnancy, and abandonment of her baby, serves to consciously break down any possible remaining romantic view of the female revolutionary: first by refusing a redemptive narrative after rape by the state, and finally by subverting the image of the mother-warrior prized by Western feminists.

The popular image of the female guerilla with a gun in her hand and a baby on her back, as Srila Roy argues "is one that has a longstanding presence in the imaginary of 'liberatory', especially nationalist struggles in the 'third world', and is an acknowledged part of a revolutionary femininity" (2009). Singh too highlights the prevalence of the image of the woman with a baby and a gun, that despite its gender bias, continues to mobilize a kind of feminist pride in female participation in political violence (2015). This image, in relation to the Naxalite Movement persists today, in the figure of the original female Naxalite, Shanti Munda, who participated in the initial violent uprising at Naxalbari with her baby strapped to her back (Jyoti and Giri, 2017; Mukherjee 2017).

Revathy's narrative in *Ministry* subverts both the iconic scene of confrontation and redemption in Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi" and the image of the mother-warrior. Revathy's rape, like Dopdi's is multiple, and prolonged, but it is cast in her narrative as part of her story rather than the apex: "Then they all raped me many times." Revathy writes, "One is Udaya's father. Which, how can I say? I was unconscious. When I waked again I was bleeding everywhere. The door was open. They were outside smoking. I could see my sari. I slowly took it" (428). The inclusion of Revathy's act of clothing herself after her rape and running away echoes but inverts the story of Dopdi. Further, the rape results in a child, complicating the view of the mother-warrior, an image Roy decimates in Revathy's response when the child is born, "When I saw her first I felt very much hatred […] I thought to kill her. I put my gun on her head but could not fire because she was a small and cute baby" (430). There is no romance in this scene of the

rape victim as mother and her infanticidal fantasy, yet, like her choice to join the PLGA, is depicted with sympathy by the author. This ultimately seems to be the position contemporary authors are taking in response to the situation on the ground for female revolutionary fighters: to demythologize and deromanticize the choice to take up the gun, as well as the hope for change represented by such a choice, and yet to remind their readers of the stark choices available to those on the margins of society and experiencing the levels of material and structural violence occurring as the global capitalist system partners with the overdeveloped state to continue the dispossession of the Indian adivasi and tribal communities.

Conclusion

The end of Revathy's letter encapsulates the critical challenge represented by the Maoist struggle by emphasizing the limitations of both nonviolence, in the face of state terror and in the context of consolidated global capitalism, and the problems which inhere in revolutionary violence as a viable response due to the Party's own flaws and in light of the overdevelopment of the state.[27] As Priyamvada Gopal suggests in a recent essay on the Maoist struggle:

> None of these, however, addresses the larger question of how radical change, even if not quite the tabula rasa Fanon dreamed of, might be achieved in the context of a capitalism that works through the appropriation of democratic structures and by eliciting the consent of those it exploits. This remains the most frustrating challenge of our own troubled present (2013).

27 As Bernard D'Mello argues, the contemporary impasse for the Maoist struggle stems from its confrontation "India's overdeveloped state, particularly the state's repressive apparatus, which is backed by a coercive legal structure and endorsed by a colonial value system" (2018, 21).

Both *Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and *A State of Freedom*, in their depiction of the current "post-magic" moment of revolutionary violence, affirm this challenge, and though they offer no way out for Revathy or Soni, they draw attention to those on the very periphery of Indian politics, and perhaps, by doing so, begin to engage them in a larger community of care. Situated as they are within narratives of alternative engagements with the state and society, Revathy and Soni's narratives, despite their stark realities, are drawn into a web of connection and solidarity with other figures in the text – their experiences, lives, and deaths variously "heard" or transmitted to other characters, suggesting that perhaps in telling the story or attending to these precarious figures, they might be worked into a larger narrative of contemporary India or serve to highlight the desperation of those "inside" the struggle, and the necessity of an awareness and solidarity from those "outside". At the very least they draw attention to the imperative for new thinking that might resolve such an impasse and initiate new modalities of transformative resistance.

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Coda: Counter-Nostalgia

The "Revising Resistance" of the title of this project could also alternatively be cast as "Counter-Nostalgia" — a way of drawing out alternative, creative, and reflective iterations of history and its interactions with the present moment in order to establish stronger bonds across ethnic, racial, and national spaces. All of the novels under consideration are inclusive in this way and attentive to elided historical voices and perspectives. Contemporaneously, similar projects are rapidly arising beyond the realm of literature in the visual arts. Indeed, through the ability to rapidly disseminate images through instagram and other social media platforms, the visual arts seem to be transcending some of the barriers to accessing a global audience in their ability to bypass distribution networks and connect directly to their audience.

This September, for example, Bankslave, a graffiti artist from Kenya, collaborated with Kristina Kay Robinson after being introduced in a New Orleans-to-Nairobi Artivist Exchange put on by the Noirlinians, self-described as "an AfroFashion blog exploring the complex relationship between culture, clothing & identity in the diaspora" and paying homage to New Orleans, which the founders read as "the most African city in the U.S." (*Noirlinians*). At the Artivist Exchange, Robinson and Bankslave discussed Robinson's idea to create an homage to The Source, a hip-hop magazine, which they both had fond memories of —as Robinson explains, "Thousands of miles apart we had both grown up fascinated by the cataloged thumbnails of graffiti artists present in every issue." Their new rendering of an issue cover page then, would be street art, and they decided to feature on its cover Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi of the Mau Mau Land and Freedom Army. There are obvious reasons for Bankslave's connection with this Kenyan freedom fighter, and additionally, Robinson notes,

> For me personally, Kimathi's connection to Black American History (Malcolm X suggested in 1965, in his "Prospects for Freedom" speech that the Mau Mau were the solution in Mississippi and elsewhere to racist violence) and his aesthetic (the free-form locs that came as a result of he and other Mau Mau felling into the country and living in caves while evading the British) made him the right person.

The mural itself not only embodies but extends these transnational resistance communities, including the central mural of Kimathi himself, and print on the right reading "Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi: The Kenya Land and Freedom Army Mau Mau"; on the right the slogan of the Land and Freedom Army: "Mzungu Aende Ulay – Mwafrika Apate Uhuru" which translates to "Let the white man return to Europe; let Africa attain freedom"; and crucially, below Kimathi's portrait, an additional quotation, "Better to die on our feet than to live on our knees" most often ascribed to Mexican revolutionary Emeliano Zapata.

This image and its medium, in a transnational, public-facing art space of New Orleans and also through its rapidly disseminated message through social media, is reflective of some of the potentials inherent in returning to and reflectively revising history. Pivotally, and in dialogue with my chapters here, the image encapsulates the combination of despair and sacrifice that eventually overcomes hope in representations of the Maoist struggle in the novels of Roy and Mukherjee, and of the lived memories of the Mau Mau Uprising and its legacy of trauma in *Dust* by Owour. However, though death is central in the image due to Kimathi's execution, and the Zapata quote, it can simultaneously be read as radically hopeful in that Kimathi is the figure that is selected in 2018 to animate, inspire, and create connection between generations and across nations through African ancestry and collaborative creation of public-facing art. The expansive nature of the African collective, articulated in this mural is engaged in a similar project to

that of the fiction I have gathered and analyzed here. Like Bankslave, the authors I have analyzed in this project are similarly invested in expanding the concept of nation to find solidarities between groups and emphasize that connection in the face of struggle, and in the face of neocolonialism or late stage capitalism that continues to produce divisions among those who might band together in resistance.

The complexity of the mural's nostalgic positioning presents an exciting and vibrant forward-momentum in creative spaces that works against ethnonationalist nostalgia increasingly visible across the globalized world, in both megastates like the US and the UK and in India, Brazil, etc., which produces vastly different versions of history in exclusive rather than inclusive and expansive directions. In the face of current public discourse calling for border walls, Hindu nationalism, and ethnic political parties, this mural deconstructs the separations between ethnic, national, and localized communities and establishes a message of solidarity and struggle in its wake. As Robinson suggests in her article, it engages with the important question: "How does actual resistance to colonialism and imperialism interact with our memory of it?

My dissertation began by centering on the intersections of globalization and large-scale violence in Kenya and India, looking at the way in which contemporary novels trace the legacies of colonial and postcolonial history in the current troubled present. This question of the rise of globalization and an attendant uptick in large-scale violence has been central to theory across disciplines, especially in the war on terror era. Arjun Appadurai has suggested that it is a particular relationship between the two that characterizes postcolonial societies on the margins of the world economy where an anxiety - even if imagined - of a state's minority status in the globalized economy of a few "megastates" compromises its sovereignty and creates clashes centered on fantasies of national purity within the cultural field, leading to intimate and vivisectionist violence

against minority communities. In the absence of a clear enemy such as the figure of the settler colonialist or landlord of the past, globalization brings with it a new type of violence that represents for Appadurai, "an effort to exorcise the new, the emergent, and the uncertain, one name for which is globalization" (47-48).

This nostalgia for an authentic ethno-purist national history that likely never existed seems to be precisely what animates the rise of alt-right nationalisms across the globe, from Modi's India and Trump's America, to the continuing production and mobilization of tribal and ethnic divisions by politicians each time Kenya approaches new elections. Make America Great Again is predicated on an ethnonationalist nostalgia to recuperate an "authentic" and pure nation that never in fact existed, just as the rise of Hindutva creates a Hindu nation out of a plurality of religious and ethnic histories across the geography of what is now India. In Kenya, politicians have consistently mobilized and produced narratives of ethnic autochthony to justify the rule of a particular party especially in opposition to a rival politician from a different ethnic or regional background. Each of these instances produce incredible amounts of civil unrest and violence against minority groups on material and epistemological levels. Importantly, the recent moves to black list academics who support Palestine in the United States and production of the category Urban Naxal to justify the arrests of prominent Leftist activists and intellectuals in India suggests that the "fantasies of national purity" that Appadurai claims creates intimate violence against minorities within the nation state has expanded from those countries at the margins (including India) that he takes on in his analysis to include Trump-era America and the Brexit-era UK, along with countless other concerning developments across Europe.[28]

[28] For in depth analysis of this phenomenon, see Inglehart and Norris, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (2018).

This ethnonationalist nostalgia can be defined within the framework of Svetlana Boym's work as "restorative," in its desire to recuperate a lost home based on nationalism or religion. One has only to look briefly at the rise of Hindutva violence in India or alt-right xenophobic violence in the United States to see the terrifying power of this nostalgia and the ways those in power can mobilize it. The rise of new forms of nationalism obsessed with ethno-purity such as these, along with the representations in texts of the futility of violent resistance against economic and political inequality, in some ways paints a pessimistic picture of the present and any possible future that might arise from it. The "Post-Magic" quality of literary representations of female participation in revolutionary violence in India today, and the manner in which Mau Mau anticolonial violence in Kenya is evacuated of positive potentials in novels after the PEV similarly can be read as pessimistic.

However, as I have attempted to draw out in my readings of the texts, with the contradictory and pessimistic renderings of these revolutionary moments and movements, the texts simultaneously draw out alternative histories and creative reinventions of the present which might have liberatory future potentials embodied within them. In Kenya, literature is increasingly and cognizantly addressing issues arising from ethnic tension head-on, and creating communities for the production of art to make change. The Mau Mau Collective was created to unite and support African artists across medias, drawing its name from the anticolonial fighters, but importantly changing their name from the original Mau Mau Arts to take on Collective in order to emphasize the unity they aim to develop in the creative community. Founder Robert Munuku explains, "I chose this name because we are the contemporary revolutionaries using our creative skills to transform our country and continent" (ElDeeb). In the realm of fiction, Billy Kahora, the current editor of Kwani?, explains that the literary journal "is specifically interested in

mapping out these conversations in the public space called literature and narrative" (Ni Chonghaile). In Kenya, the creative arts are then specifically imagined by new communities of artists and writers as capable of creating new social spaces and imaginaries, to, as Munuku claims, "transform our country and our continent".

Theorists, too, engage with the positive side — the foil — to the negative momentum of globalization and violence. Boym, for example, posits another version of nostalgia, one that is reflective rather than restorative, capable of "cherish[ing] shattered fragments of memory and temporalities of space". In a different context, Gaurav Desai, on his exploration of the Afrasian imagination argues of recent books focusing on the Indian community in Kenya,

> Standing up to the oftentimes restrictive mores and social codes of the societies they inhabit, they have to accept the risks of being ostracized, ridiculed, and even defeated in order to become agents of social change.. Their politics is not one that speaks the language of revolutions, but rather a biopolitics of affect, where interpersonal relationships take a significant center stage. Such a biopolitics will always seem suspect to those for whom political efficacy can only be measured in large-scale institutional and structural change (*Commerce with the Universe*, 212).

I will admit that in approaching these texts, I was hoping to find a way to recuperate the revolutionary potential embodied in the Naxalite Movement and the Mau Mau Uprising. I hoped that there was some way still that peasant insurgency had a chance, that such efforts had not been sidelined. As my title for the opening chapter indicates, I was hoping to discover within literature an investment in the transformative potential of such movements. However, what I found, was precisely this other kind of nostalgia – a reflective nostalgia interested in telling stories, sharing experiences, acknowledging persistent problems, and tentatively imagining a collective global future. I wish to close

by suggesting that it is precisely this other form of nostalgia that the novels under consideration are able to recuperate, productively resisting restorative nostalgia in the political realm.

This form of reflective nostalgia in the novels read here, that seem pessimistic in their renderings of the past, may in fact emotionally prepare the postcolonial nation to face the future by suturing the divides between the groups, between the "inside" and "outside" so there are stories and histories in common. Read this way, such literature is invested in countering and undoing the rising nostalgia for ethno-purity in its focus on complexity, unexpected solidarities, and the contradictory nature of history and memory. Through the cultivation of creative acts and the desire to transmit them to others, by the characters, but also the novels themselves, the authors establish connections across groups, reflect on what is forgotten, and encourage alternative stories, both personal and national. In this way, I read this selection of novels as doing precisely the work Billy Kahora suggests is imperative to writers in Kenya today, to resist the "amnesiac collusion" of society and focus on the representation, not of "the Kenya we Want" but of "the Kenya we live in". Both Kimani and Owour from Kenya, and Mukherjee and Roy from India seem to be similarly invested in such a project of facing the present in the "full face" as Wainana describes the project of truth-telling after the PEV, to face the realities of violence and its contexts, legacies, and inspirations from the complex histories of the two countries, and from this place of expanded understanding face the future differently.

I believe this new canon provides a productive site of study to counter some of the ideological and discursive investments of dominant political thought arising in the era of globalization and the war on terror, and especially in the face of the recent rise of neo-fascist ideology across the globe. Not only is fiction able to counter the metalepsis

inherent in war on terror discourse, but it also, in its fusion of past and present, colonial and postcolonial history, insists on the long history of the present moment and the colonial legacies still unfolding across the globe. Narrative's capacity to represent history complexly and from multiple perspectives and sites makes it serve as what Wai Chee Dimock describes in a different context as both a "corrective" and a "supplement" to the kinds of binary, romantic, or otherwise flattening thinking about postcolonial nations' past and present violence through the focus on the residues, the leftovers of here, history rather than justice, that continue to haunt the present and must be acknowledged for nations to heal and move forward.

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In the vein of forward thinking, this research has also brought to the fore several important questions that require further exploration. The first is a more specific and in-depth analysis of the intersections of nationalism and anti-state violence in India. The last two years in India have witnessed a significant shift in the way the specter of the Naxalite is mobilized by the state, particularly the emergence in the last year of the politically produced "urban Naxal" to brand communities of resistant activists, intellectuals, and writers, as witnessed in the recent arrests of major figures in June and August of this year.[29]

Connecting the study I begin here, of tracing representations of the Naxalite figure over time in literature, with the emergence and mobilization of this particular term,

[29] Arrests occurred in June and August of this year of mainly human rights activists', intellectuals, and writers, events which Harshvardan refers to as India's McCarthyian moment, as the state uses whatever means possible to curb dissent and brand it as anti-nationalist at best, and associate it with terrorism at worst ("From Anti-National to Urban Naxal: The Trajectory of Dissent in India" 2018).

would be a useful and important extension, especially in its relation to the popular imaginary of Naxalism, and the current rise of Hindutva violence, through an analysis of how literature engages with these movements and figures, as well as the ways in which authors and their works circulate in response to such moments of public and political crisis. The study of the branding of revolutionary resistance, violence, and ideology by the state, as well as what drives it, is of particular urgency in the face of the intensification across the globe of new forms of violent nationalisms.

Analysis of the Naxalite/Maoist Movement in India in particular, which is the longest running guerilla conflict in the world, importantly provides a unique opportunity to engage with both state counter-insurgency tactics and ideologies, as well as the perceived continued necessity for revolutionary violence on the ground, a debate, as Alpa Shah suggests, is no longer accessible in the rest of the world.

The second strand that could usefully be further developed is research into gender and revolutionary violence, a field I have sketched out in Chapter Four, but which could be more broadly articulated in a study of literary texts from a variety of local contexts, including the Maoist struggle in Nepal and the current resistance movement in Kashmir. The literature emerging particularly from the latter location is copious and has clear connections to the contemporary Maoist struggle - including in Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, though I had neither the time nor space to explore this connection in the dissertation.

Conducting a comparative analysis of representations of female resistance fighters across national spaces could open up new ways of thinking through the current impasse in postcolonial feminist debates centered on war and violence in the global south. This impasse, as articulated in Chapter Four, broadly sets interpretations of revolutionary violence for women as empowering and agential, against concerns of feminist thinkers

about the ends of such violence and if they can ever truly empower, or if, instead, they reaffirm and reproduce masculinist violence that ultimately supports patriarchal agendas and justifies increased state violence that largely impacts poor women in the global south. There is much material that could expand the existing study from the Maoist struggle in India to include a wider consideration of women and violent resistance across South Asia more broadly, and through this gendered focus, expand our understanding of the complexities that underlie concepts such as the nation, violence, and resistance which so often produce binary thinking.

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